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SERMONS

TRANSLATED

from the

ORIGINAL FRENCH

of the late

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

Pastor of the French Church at the Hague.

VOL VI.

ON SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.

Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. ,.St. Peter.

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SERMON I.

THE SONG OF SIMEON.*

LUKE ii. 25—30.

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law; then he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

NOW *let me die since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive,* Gen. xlvi. 30. This was the exclamation of an affectionate father; might I not have said, of a *weakly* affectionate father, on a memorable occasion in his life. If such an emotion savors not of heroism, it is at least an effusion of nature. Joseph had been the centre of a fond parent's tenderest affections. Jacob had

* If the reader wishes to peruse Saurin's Sermons as originally arranged, that on the Birth of Jesus Christ, the third of vol. II. of Mr. Robinson's selection, immediately precedes this on the Song of Simeon.

for more than twenty years been impressed with the belief that this dearly beloved son was *devoured by an evil beast.* He displayed every token of affliction that could be expressed by the paternal heart, on the loss of a child, a darling child, thus cruelly torn from him. After so many years of mourning, he is informed that his son is yet alive, that he is exalted to the most eminent state of power and splendor which the king of Egypt could bestow; that he had sent to bring his father down to him. Every instant now appears an age to the good old man, till the period of their re-union arrives. Every thing that retards the accomplishment of his wishes, seems to defeat it. He trembles to think on the length of the way, on the dangers of such a journey, on his own debilitated frame. He departs at length, he reaches the desired haven; he beholds with his eyes the endeared object of so many earnest prayers. He feels himself in the embrace of his Joseph, he feels his visage bedewed with the tears of filial love. Joy deprives him of the powers of utterance, and with difficulty the faultering tongue can pronounce the words which Moses, if I may be allowed the expression, seems to have derived from the bowels of paternal tenderness: *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.*

A greater than Jacob, my brethren, or rather a greater than Joseph is here. Simeon had received from God the assurance of having his life prolonged till his eyes should see the promised Messiah. On the accomplishment of that promise depended the solution of these anxious inquiries, so interesting to the wretched posterity of Adam:—Is there any mitigation to be expected of that fatal denunciation, *In the day thou eatest of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17

Did so many oracles, which announce a Redeemer, proceed from God or from men?—Is it possible that the love of God should rise so high, as to immolate his own Son in the room of the guilty?—In a word, is the expectation of Israel well founded, or is it chimerical? The promise is at last fulfilled: that divine Infant at last appears, whom God had *prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel*, Luke ii. 31, 32. Already has an angel of the Lord announced his advent to the shepherds: already has a multitude of the heavenly host made the air resound with these triumphant strains, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men*, Luke ii. 14. Already have the sages of the East arrived to render him supreme homage, as to their sovereign. What remained to Simeon, after having seen the Saviour of the world, but to take possession of the long expected salvation? He accordingly takes the child in his arms: his faith is now changed into vision, and his hope into enjoyment, and he in transport exclaims, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

This devout rapture is to be the subject of our present discourse, and its import we shall attempt to unfold, after having made a few reflections of a different kind, tending to elucidate the text.

I. We are to make a few preliminary reflections, for elucidating the text. And here it is natural, in the first place, to inquire, who this Simeon was, who acts such a distinguished part at this period of the gospel history? But all that can be added to the narration of the Evangelist, is merely a tissue of conjectural traditions, probably false, or, at best,

extremely uncertain. Cardinal Baronius, * on the authority of some ancient doctors of the church, insists that he must have been of the sacerdotal order. This they attempt to prove from the words of the passage under review, *He took the infant Jesus in his arms*, as if to present him to the Lord; in idea not supported by any one of the circumstances recorded in the gospel. Certain modern doctors † believe him to have been the son of the celebrated Hillel, who was chief of the sect of the Pharisees. They even go so far as to assert, that he was the father of that Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul was brought up. With respect to his condition, a variety of fables are retailed descriptive of his person; such as that he was blind, ‡ and recovered his sight on receiving our Saviour in his arms: and the other, of his being one of the interpreters of the Septuagint version; ‖ that having found many passages which predicted that the Messiah was to be born of a Virgin, he refused to translate them; nay, that he substituted the term *Woman* in the place of *Virgin*, in translating the noted prediction of Isaiah, vii. 14: that having closed his tablets, on opening them to resume his labor, he found the word *Virgin* miraculously substituted in place of *Woman;* that he besought God to grant him an explanation of this wonderful phenomenon, and his prayer was answered: once more, ¶ that having seen in the temple various women presenting their children, he had distin-

* Annal. Eccles. A. C. 1 page 58. Tom. I. Antv. 1612.

† Consult Lightfoot, Tom. II. Horæ Hebr. in Luc. II. 25. page 498. Rot. 1686.

‡ Baronius ut supra.

‖ Allatius de Eccl. Occid. Col. 1648. Niceph. Hist. Eccl. Lib. I. cap. 2. Paris, 1630.

¶ Baronius ut supra.

guished the holy Virgin by certain rays of light which surrounded her person, on which he thus addressed the other mothers: *Wherefore do you present these children before the alter? Turn round, and behold this one, who is more ancient than Abraham.* Fictions, of no higher authority than what is farther related of him, namely, that the Jews,* jealous of his talents and virtues, and, more especially, scandalized at the testimony which he had borne to Jesus Christ, had refused him the honors of sepulture; that his remains, after having reposed a long time at Constantinople, † in a chapel dedicated by James, denominated the Less, were conveyed to Venice ‡ in the thirteenth century.

Dropping, then, legends of such doubtful authority, let us satisfy ourselves with exhibiting Simeon under three authentic characters, which, while they lead us to an acquaintance with the man himself, will give us an idea of the state of the Jewish nation at the era of the Messiah's birth. The first respects the faith of Simeon: *he waited for the consolation of Israel.* The second respects his piety and moral conduct: *he was just and devout.* The third respects his gifts and privileges: *he was divinely inspired, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

1. *He waited for the consolation of Israel*, that is, for the Messiah. This phraseology was adopted by the ancient Jews, and is still in use among the modern. *The years of the consolation:* ‖ is an

* From a passage of St. Epiphanius misunderstood. See Epiph. Tom II. de Vit. Proph. page 150. Paris 1622.

† Codin. Orig. Const. page 56. Lut. 1655.

‡ Tillemont, Memoir. Eccles. Tom. I. page 448. Par. 1693.

‖ Lightfoot, in supra.

usual expression employed by them to denote the years of the Messiah. One of the most solemn oaths is that which appeals to *the consolation:* and one of their most common formularies is to this effect: *So may I see the consolation, as I have done such or such a thing: so may I see the consolation as my testimony is consistent with truth.* The prophets themselves employ the same style: *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,* Isa. xl. 1. *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, ... and to comfort all that mourn,* Isa. xli. 1, 2. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people,* Isa. xlix. 13.

It were easy to prove, that these are so many oracular predictions, which the inspired authors of the New Testament, the only infallible interpreters of the Old, understood as descriptive of the Messiah. And proofs would multiply upon us without end, were we more particularly to undertake to demonstrate, that the title of the *consolation* is peculiarly adapted to our Lord Jesus Christ: but however instructive such reflections might be of themselves, they would carry us too far from the present object of pursuit.

We could only wish, that the faith of Simeon might assist you in forming an idea of the state of the Jewish Church, prior to the coming of the Messiah. Believers, under that dispensation, entertained the same expectation with Simeon; like him they waited for *the consolation of Israel.*

We by no means presume to affirm, that their ideas on this subject were exempted from prejudice. We well know that they assigned to most of

the oracles which announced a Redeemer, a sense conformable to the color of their passions. Isaiah, who represented him as *despised and rejected of men*, Isa. liii. 3. had, undoubtedly, a more just conception of him than the sons of Zebedee adopted, Mark x. 37. when they requested of him the most distinguished honors of his kingdom. Daniel, who predicted that the *Messiah should be cut off*, Dan. ix. 26. entered, undoubtedly, much more profoundly into the view of his coming into the world, than Peter did, who having heard him speak of the death which he was to suffer, *began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*, Mat. xvi. 22. Job, who contemplated him by the eye of faith, *as standing at the latter day upon the earth*, Job xix. 25, 26. and who hoped to behold him eye to eye, even after *worms should have destroyed his body*, knew incomparably better the blessings which he was to purchase for mankind, than those grovelling spirits who expected from him temporal enjoyments merely. Even those of the Jews, whose understanding was most clearly enlightened, had much less penetration into the mystery of the cross, than the meanest of Christians; and according to the saying of Jesus Christ, *He that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is*, in this respect, *greater than John Baptist*, Matt. xi. 11. and then all the prophets: nevertheless, they all lived in expectation of a deliverer: they all considered him as the centre of every divine grace: they all waited for him as *the consolation of Israel*. This is the first character given us of Simeon.

2. He was *just and devout*. The epithet *just* must not be taken in a literal and exact sense. Beware how you give the lie to revelation, to experience, to your own heart, whose concurring testi-

mony evinces that *there is none righteous* upon the earth, *no not one;* imagine not that Simeon, by his virtues, merited the privilege of *seeing the Lord's Christ*, and of partaking of the fruits of his incarnation. The righteousness of Simeon consisted in the efforts which he made to work righteousness: his perfection, in the desire with which he was animated to go on to perfection, and in the regret which he felt that his attainments were so inconsiderable. The sacrifices which he made to God, derived all their value from the mercy of that God who was the object of his fear. Let this great principle of christian theology be deeply impressed on your minds: lose sight of it no not for a moment, and be constantly vigilant, lest the impure doctrine of the merit of good works find admission among you.

But wherefore suggest cautions to this effect? Wherefore should these walls so frequently resound with truths of this class? My brethren, you have so effectually excluded, by your coldness in the performance of good works, the doctrine of their merit, that there is little room to entertain the apprehension of its ever finding an establishment in the midst of us. And it is an undeniable fact, that this error has gained no partisans in our churches: at least, if there be any, they have hitherto kept themselves invisible. We have seen many persons who, under the power of illusion, imagined they had fulfilled the conditions upon which the promises of salvation are founded: but never did we find one who advanced a plea of merit. But what we have seen, and what we have cause every day to deplore, and what is involving multitudes in utter ruin, is our frequently deceiving ourselves with the belief, that because *righteousness* and *the fear of God*, are not meritorious, they are therefore unnecessary.

What we have seen, and what we have cause every day to deplore, is the unhappy persuasion prevailing with many who bear the christian name, that because the advent of the Messiah is a dispensation of grace, it gives encouragement to licentiousness and corruption.

Let us not employ such ingenious pains to deceive ourselves. Multiply without end, ye *disputers of this world*, your questions and controversies; it will never be in your power to prevent my clearly discerning, in the doctrine of the gospel, this twofold truth: on the one hand, that the best preparation for receiving the reign of grace, is that which Simeon made: *he was just and devout, and he waited for the consolation of Israel.* On the other hand, that the most insurmountable obstacle which can be opposed to this reign, is impiety and injustice. *Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a high-way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God*, Isa. xl. 3. Matt. iii. 3. Luke iii. 6. This was the voice of the forerunner of Jesus Christ; and wherein did he make this preparation to consist? The preparation of him who had *two coats*, was to *impart to him who had none*, Luke iii. 11. The preparation of him who had *meat*, was to act in like manner. That of the publicans, was to *exact no more than that which was appointed them*, ver. 13. That of the soldier, was to *do violence to no man, to accuse no one falsely, and to be content with his wages*, ver. 14. The preparation of all, was to *bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*, ver. 8. Without these, the reign of grace was the reign of wrath: without these, *the ax was*

already laid unto the root of the trees ; and every tree which brought not forth good fruit, was to be hewn down, and cast into the fire, ver. 9. and this Messiah, this Redeemer of mankind, was to come with *his fan in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor ; to gather the wheat into his garner ; but to burn the chaff with fire unquenchable,* ver. 17.

Ah ! if at this period of the gospel dispensation, when we are exercising, in some manner, the function of John Baptist, if in these days wherein we come to announce the revival of the reign of Jesus Christ in the midst of us, by the celebration of his incarnation and birth; by the commemoration which we are to make next Lord's day in the sacrament of the supper : if at this season, when we are crying aloud to you in the words of St. John, *prepare ye the way of the Lord :* should you, with the multitudes who attended his ministry, inquire, saying, *and what shall we do ?* We would reply, wait for *the consolation of Israel,* as Simeon waited for it : *bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.*

Prepare the way of the Lord, ye great ones of the earth ; lead the way in a procession of penitents, as the king of Ninevah did, when the preaching of Jonah thundered impending destruction in his ears, Jon. iii. 4, 9. *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,* 1 Pet. v. 6. *by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,* Prov. viii. 15. Employ the power with which Providence has entrusted you, not in a vain display of furniture more magnificent, or of equipages more splendid ; not by assuming a deportment more lofty and intimidating ; but in curbing bold and insolent vice ; but in maintaining the cause of truth and justice ; but in wiping away the tears of the widow and the orphan ; but in rewarding services rendered to the

state; but in procuring respect to the solemn institutions of religion; but in preventing the circulation of indecent and corruptive publications; and, as far as in you lies, in levelling to the ground that monster infidelity, which is rearing its daring forehead in the midst of you.

Prepare the way of the Lord, ye pastors of the flock. Distinguish yourselves from private individuals, not only by the habit which you wear, and by the functions which you discharge; but by your zeal for the church of Christ; by your unshaken firmness and fortitude in opposing those who imprudently transgress; but by preserving a scrupulous distance from every thing characteristic rather of the slaves of this world, than of the ministers of the living God.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, professing Christians. Celebrate your solemn feasts, not only by frequenting our religious assemblies, but by a holy abstinence from those secret abominations, and those public scandalous practices, which have so long inflamed the wrath of heaven against us; which even now are scattering the seeds of discord through these provinces; which are draining the resources of our country, which are tarnishing her glory, which present to our eyes, in a lowering futurity, vicissitudes still more calamitous and more deeply ensanguined, than those which have already cost us so many tears and so much blood.

This, this is the only effectual method of waiting for deliverance and redemption. Far removed from us be those frivolous terrors, which would suggest, that to be subjected to the yoke of Jesus Christ, is to derogate from his merits! And let us not deceive ourselves; there is not a single particular in the system of the gospel; there is not a single article of Christian theology, but what

preaches terror, if we are destitute of that righteousness, and of that fear of God, with which Simeon *waited for the consolation of Israel.* In order to our having an interest in the pardoning mercy which the Messiah has purchased for us, we must *fear God,* as Simeon did; we must be *just* as he was; we must hold sin in detestation; we must be *of a poor and of a contrite spirit,* Isa. lxvi. 2. because of it; we must *cease to do evil, and learn to do well,* Isa. i. 16, 17. In order to our having an interest in sanctifying grace, and in the spirit of regeneration, communicated to us from the Messiah, we must *fear* God as did Simeon; we must be *just* like him; we must love wisdom; we must *ask it of God . . . . nothing wavering,* James i. 5, 6. or, as the passage of St. James, to which I refer, might be rendered, not halting, or hesitating between the choice of wisdom and folly; we must not be like *a wave of the sea,* which seems to be making a movement towards the shore, but anon returns with impetuosity into the gulf from which it issued.

Farther, in order to our having a knowledge of the doctrines which were taught by the Messiah, we must *fear God* as did Simeon, we must be *just* like him; for *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant,* Ps. xxv. 14. and *if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself,* Jo. vii. 17. In order to our having an interest in the promises of the glory to be revealed, which are made to us by the Messiah, we must *fear God,* as did Simeon, we must be *just* like him, *for without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. and *having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

If we would attain the assurance of salvation, we must *fear God*, as did Simeon, we must be *just* like him: *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, 1 Cor. x. 12. and *if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee*, Rom. xi. 21.

3. Finally, we are informed by the evangelist, that *the Holy Ghost was upon Simeon: and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

On this particular, I shall confine myself to a single reflection. It supplies us with an explication of several ancient oracles, and particularly that of the prophet Joel: *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*, Joel ii. 28. The Jews themselves acknowledge, that the spirit of prophecy was one of the prerogatives which had been denied to the second temple. This gift seems to have expired with the Malachi. For an uninterupted series of more than four hundred years no prophet had arisen. This high privilege was not to be restored to the church till *the latter days* should come; and, conformably to the style of the Old Testament, *the latter days* denote the dispensation of the Messiah. Here, then, we have the commencement of *the latter days*. Here we behold the prophetic illumination re-appearing in all its lustre. Here the hallowed fire is rekindling, and celestial revelations enlightened a dark world. These exalted privileges are communicated first to Zacharias, who beholds an angel of the Lord *standing on the right side of the altar of incense*, Luke i. 11. They are next bestowed on the blessed Virgin, whom

the angel thus addresses, "*Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women,* ver. 28. They are extended even to the shepherds, to whom another angel announces the birth of the Saviour of the world, and who *suddenly* hear a *multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men,* Luke ii. 13, 14. They are poured down upon Simeon, and we shall presently behold the whole Christian church inundated with an overflowing flood of divine irradiation. Let this suffice as to the character of Simeon.

II. We are to attempt to unfold the import of the devout rapture which he felt. And here let us give undivided attention to the object before us, and let every power of thought be applied to discover, and to display, the emotions by which this holy man of God was then animated. He takes Jesus Christ in his arms: he blesses God, and says, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Lettest thou thy servant depart:* the Greek phrase, literally rendered, is, *thou unloosest,* or *settest free thy servant.* The sense of the expression cannot, in my apprehension, be disputed in this place. To *unloose,* in the writings of certain profane authors, and the meaning is the same in our text, signifies that act of Deity which separates the soul from the body. *Thou liberates thy servant in peace,* that is, *thou permittest thy servant to die in peace.* This object, which strikes the eyes of Simeon, is to him a complete security against the terrors of death. Wherefore should he wish to live longer in this world? Could it be to behold some wonderful event, or to acquire some

valuable possession? But his whole soul is wrapt in admiration of the object with which his eyes are feasted: the delight he feels in contemplating the Redeemer, *the Lord's Christ*, absorbs every faculty. Could the fear of the punishment of sin suggest a wish to live longer? He holds in his arms the victim which is going to be offered up to divine justice. Could he desire longer life from any doubt he entertained respecting the doctrine of a life to come? He is at the very source of life, and needs only to be released from a mortal body, to arrive at immortality. Three sources of meditation, well worthy, I am bold to say, of all the attention you are able to bestow.

1. The desire of beholding some wonderful and interesting event, is one of the most usual causes of attachment to life. There are certain fixed points, in which all hopes seem to be concentrated. Nothing is more common among men, even among those whose character as Christians is the least liable to suspicion, than to say, could I but live to see such and such an event take place, I should die content: could I but live to see that adversary of the church confounded: could I but live to see that mystery of Providence unfolded: could I but live to see Zion arise out of her ruins, and the chains of her bondmen broken asunder: could I but live to see my son attain such and such a period. Such emotions are not in every case to be condemned as unlawful; but how much do they frequently savor of human infirmity! Let it be our study to die at peace with God, and we shall be disposed to die whenever it shall please him, who has sent us into the world, to call us out of it again.

Death draws aside the curtain, which conceals from our eyes what is most worthy of our regard,

of our desire, of our admiration. If thou diest in a state of reconciliation with God, thine eyes shall behold events infinitely more interesting and important than all those which can suggest a wish to continue longer in this world. Thou shalt behold something unspeakably greater than the solution of some particular mystery of Providence: thou shalt discern an universal light, which shall dispel all thy doubts, resolve all thy difficulties, put to flight all thy darkness. Thou shalt behold something incomparably surpassing the confusion of those tyrants whose prosperity astonishes and offends thee: thou shalt behold Jesus at the right hand of his Father, holding *a rod of iron*, ready to *dash in pieces, like a potter's vessel*, Ps. ii. 9. all those who dare oppose his empire. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more sublime than the dust of Zion re-animated: thou shalt behold the *New Jerusalem*, of which *God and the Lamb* are the *Sun* and the *Temple*, Rev. xxi. 2, 22, 23. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more interesting than the chains of her bondmen broken asunder: thou shalt behold the souls of a thousand martyrs, invested with *white robes*, Rev. vi. 11. because they fought under the banner of the cross: thou shalt hear them crying one to another, *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*, Rev. xix. 6, 7. Thou shalt behold something incomparably more interesting than the establishment of that Son, the object of so many tender affections: thou shalt behold those multitudes of glorified saints who are eternally to partake with thee in the felicity of the ever-blessed God: thine eyes shall behold that adorable face, the looks of which absorb, if I may use the expression, all those of the creature.

Let it be admitted, at the same time, that if ever any one could be justified in expressing a wish to have the hour of death deferred, it was in the case of those believers who lived at the period when the Messiah was expected. This was the case of Simeon. Brought up under an economy in which every thing was mysterious and emblematical, he is justifiable, should he have expressed a wish to see the elucidation of all these sacred enigmas. When a prince is expected to visit one of our cities; when we behold the sumptuous equipages by which he is preceded, the train of messengers who announce his approach; palaces decorated, and triumphal arches reared, for his reception; does not all this excite a desire of obtaining a nearer view of the person of whom so lofty an idea is conveyed from preparations so magnificent. All these preparations, however, are in many cases, not so much the badges of the real greatness of the personage whom they announce, as of his vanity. It has oftener than once been felt, that the object of the least importance in a splendid procession, was the very man who acted as the hero of it. But what could the Levitical dispensation furnish, to convey an idea of the Messiah, but what fell infinitely short of the Messiah himself?

Simeon at length beholds this Messiah, so eagerly expected through so many ages. Simeon, more highly favored than Jacob, who, on his dying bed, exclaimed, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!* Gen. xlix. 8. Simeon exulting, says, *Lord, I have seen thy salvation:* more highly favored than so *many kings*, and so *many prophets*, who *desired to see* the Redeemer, but *did not see* him, Luke x. 24. more highly privileged than so many believers of former ages, who *saw* only *the promises* of him *afar off, and embraced them*, Heb. xi. 13.

he receives the effect of these promises; he contemplates, not *afar off*, but *nigh, the star which was to come out of Jacob*, Num. xxiv. 17. he beholds the accomplishment of the prophecies, *Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. the Ark, the Schekinah, the habitation of the Deity in his temple, he in whom *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily*, Col. ii. 9, he sees the manna, and more than the manna, for *your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead*, Jo. vi. 58. but, *whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life*, ver. 54. *Father of day*, exclaimed a pagan prince, *thou radiant Sun, I thank thee, that before I leave the world, I have had the felicity of seeing Cornelius Scipio in my kingdom and palace: now I have lived as long as I can desire.* It is the very emotion with which Simeon was animated: he has lived long enough, because he has seen *the salvation of God.* Let the Roman republic henceforth extend her empire, or let its limits be contracted; let the great questions revolving in the recesses of cabinets be determined this way or that; let the globe subsist a few ages longer, or crumble immediately into dust; Simeon has no desire to see any thing farther: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

2. Secondly, Simeon remains no longer attached to life from terror of the punishment of sin after death. *The sting of death is sin;* that sting, so painfully acute to all mankind, is peculiarly so to the aged. An old man has rendered himself responsible for all the stations which he occupied, for all the relations which he formed in social life, and in the church. And these, in general, become so many sources of remorse. Generally speaking, it is

not separation from the world merely which renders death an object of horror; it is the idea of the account which must be given in when we leave it. If nothing else were at stake, but merely to prepare for removing out of the world, a small degree of reflection, a little philosophy, a little fortitude, might answer the purpose. What is the amount of human life, especially to a man arrived at a certain period of existence? What delight can an old man find in society after his memory is decayed, after his senses are blunted, after the fire of imagination is extinguished, when he is from day to day losing one faculty after another, when he is reduced so low, as to be the object of forbearance at most, if not that of universal disgust and dereliction? But the idea of fourscore years past in hostility against God, but the idea of a thousand crimes starting into light, and calling for vengeance; by their number and their atrocity exciting *a fearful looking for of judgment*—this, this presents a just ground of terror and astonishment.

But all such terrors disappear in the eyes of Simeon; he knows the end for which this child was born, whom he now holds in his arms; he directs his eyes, beyond his cradle, to his cross; by means of the prophetic illumination which was upon him, he perceives this Christ of God *making his soul an offering for sin*, Isa. liii. 10. He expects not, as did his worldly-minded countrymen, a temporal kingdom; he forms far juster ideas of the glory of the Messiah; he contemplates him *spoiling principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, nailing them to his cross*, Col. ii. 15. Let us not be accused of having derived these ideas from the schools, and from our courses of theological study: no, we deduce this all important truth immediately from the substance of the gospel. Pon-

der seriously, I beseech you, what Simeon himself says to Mary, as he shewed to her the infant Jesus, *Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*, Luke ii. 34, 35.

What could be meant by that *sword* with which the mother of our Lord was to have her *soul pierced through?* That anguish, undoubtedly, which she should undergo on seeing her Son nailed to a cross. What an object for a mother's eye! Who, among you, my brethren, has concentrated every anxious care, every tender affection, on one darling object, say a beloved child, whom he fondly looks to as his consolation in adversity, as the glory of his family, as the support of his feeble old age? Let him be supposed to feel, what no power of language is able to express: let him put himself in the place of Mary, let that beloved child be supposed in the place of Jesus Christ: faint image still of the conflict which nature is preparing for that tender mother: feeble commentary on the words of Simeon to Mary, *yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.* Mary must lose that Son whose birth was announced to her by an angel from heaven; that Son on whose advent the celestial hosts descended to congratulate the listening earth; that Son, whom so many perfections, whom such ardor of charity, whom benefits so innumerable should have for ever endeared to mankind: already she represents to herself that frightful solitude, that state of universal desertion in which the soul finds itself, when, having been bereaved of all that it held dear, it feels as if the whole world were dead, as if nothing else remained in the vast universe, as if every thing that communicated motion and life had been annihilated.

And through what a path was she to behold this Son departing out of the world! By a species of martyrdom, the bare idea of which scares the imagination. She beholds those bountiful hands, which had so frequently fed the hungry, which had performed so many miracles of mercy, pierced through with nails: she beholds that royal head, which would have shed lustre on the diadem of the universe, crowned with thorns, and that arm, destined to wield the sceptre of the world, bearing a reed, the emblem of mock-majesty; she beholds that Temple, in which *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col, ii. 9. with all his wisdom, with all his illumination, with all his justice, with all his mercy, with all the perfections which enter into the notion of the Supreme Being; she beholds it assaulted with a profane hatchet, and an impious spear: she hears the voices of the children of Edom crying aloud, concerning this august habitation of the Most High, *Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.*

But if, even then, while she beholds Jesus expiring, she could have been permitted to approach him, to comfort him, to collect the last sigh of that departing spirit! Could she but have embraced that dearly beloved Son, to bathe him with her tears, and bid him a last farewell! Could she but for a few moments have stopped that precious fluid draining off in copious streams, and consuming the sad remains of exhausted nature! Could she but have been permitted to support that sacred sinking head, and to pour balm into his wounds! But she must submit to the hand of violence: she too is borne down by *the power of darkness*, Luke xxii. 53. She has nothing to present to the expiring sufferer, but unavailing solicitude, and fruitless tears: *a sword shall pierce through thy own soul*

also : Simeon understood, then, the mystery of the cross : he looked to the efficacy of that blood which was to be shed by the Redeemer whom he now held in his arms, and under that holy impression, exclaims, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

3. Finally, Simeon no longer feels an attachment to this world, from any doubt or suspicion he entertained respecting the doctrine of a life to come. He is now at the very fountain of life, and all that now remains is to be set free from a mortal body, in order to attain immortality. We may deduce, from the preparations of grace, a conclusion nearly similar to that which we draw from the preparations of nature, in order to establish the doctrine of a future state of eternal felicity. How magnificent are the preparations which nature makes ! What glory do they promise after death ! The author of our being has endowed the human soul with an unbounded capacity of advancing from knowledge to knowledge, from sensation to sensation. I make free here to borrow the thought of an illustrious modern author : " A perpetual circulation," says he, " of the same objects, were they subject to no other inconvenience, would be sufficient to give us a disgust of the world. When a man has beheld frequently reiterated vicissitudes of day and night, summer and winter, of spring and autumn ; in a word, of the different appearances of nature, what is there here below capable of satisfying the mind ? I am well aware," adds he, " how brilliant, how magnificent, this spectacle is ; I know how possible it is to indulge in it with a steady and increasing delight ; but I likewise know, that at length the continual recurrence of the same images cloys the imagination, which is eagerly

looking forward to the removal of the curtain, that it may contemplate new scenes, of which it can catch only a confused glimpse in the dark perspective of futurity. Death, in this point of view, is a transition merely from one scene of enjoyment to another. If present objects fatigue and excite disgust, it is only in order to prepare the soul for enjoying, more exquisitely, pleasures of a different nature, ever new, and ever satisfying."

The conclusion deducible from the preparations of nature, may likewise be derived from the preparations of grace. Let us not lose sight of our leading object. How magnificent had the preparations of grace appeared in the eyes of Simeon! This we have already hinted: the whole of the Levitical dispensation consisted of preparations for the appearance of the Messiah; if we form a judgment of the blessings which he was to bestow upon the human race, from the representations given us of him, it is impossible to refrain from drawing this conclusion, that the Messiah was to give unbounded scope to the desires of the heart of man, was to communicate to him that unspeakable felicity, for the enjoyment of which nature had already prepared him, but which nature had not the power to bestow. There, I mean in the Levitical dispensation, you found the shadows which retraced the Messiah; there you found types which represented him; there oracles which predicted him; there an exhibition, in which were displayed his riches, his pomp, his magnificence; there you heard the prophets crying aloud, *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring up together*, Isa. xlv. 8. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon*

his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, Isa. ix. 6. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished,* Isa. li. 6.

Now, what state of felicity could possibly correspond to conceptions raised so high, by preparations of such mighty import? What! amount to no more than that which the Messiah bestows in this world? What! no more than to frequent these temples? What! no more than to raise these sacred songs of praise: to celebrate our solemn feasts: to eat a little bread and to drink a little wine at the communion table? And then to die! And then to exist no more! And can this be all that *salvation* which *the earth* was to *bring forth?* And can this be all that *righteousness* which *the skies* were to *pour down?* And can this be the dew which *the heavens* were to *drop down from above?* And can this be the whole amount of the atchievements of that *Counsellor*, of that *Wonderful* one, of that *Prince of Peace*, of that *Father of Eternity? Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* Good Simeon, what meaning do you intend to convey by these words? Into what *peace* art thou wishing henceforth to depart, if these eyes, which behold the Messiah, are going to be doomed to the darkness of an eternal night? If these hands, which are privileged to embrace him, are going to become a prey to worms? And if that life which thou wert enjoying before thy Redeemer appeared,

is going to be rent from thee, because he is already come?

Ah! my brethren, how widely different are the ideas which this holy man of God entertained! *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* Wherefore *now?* Because *now* I know, from the accomplishment of thy promises, what was before a matter of presumption, only, namely, that my soul is not a mere modification of matter, and a result of the arrangement, and of the harmony of my organs: because I am *now* convinced, that this soul of mine, on being separated from the body, shall not become a forlorn wanderer in a strange and solitary land: because *now* I no longer entertain any doubt respecting my own immortality, and because I hold in my arms him who has purchased it, and who bestows it upon me: because to see Jesus Christ, and to die, is the highest blessedness that can be conferred on a mortal creature.

Permit me, my beloved brethren, to repeat my words, and with them to finish this discourse: To see Jesus Christ, and to die, is the highest blessedness that can be conferred on a mortal creature. Enjoy, my friends, enjoy the felicity which the Saviour bestows upon you, during the course of a transitory life: gratify, as you this day turn a wondering eye to the manger in which this divine Saviour lies, and as you celebrate the memory of his incarnation, gratify the taste which you have for the great and the marvellous: and cry out with an enraptured apostle, *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Gratify, as in the retirement of the closet you devote yourselves to the study of the doctrine of this Jesus, gratify the desire you feel to learn and to know: draw constant supplies of light and truth from those *treasures of*

wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. which he opens to you in his gospel. Gratify, as you receive, next Lord's day, the effusions of his love, gratify the propensity which naturally disposes you to love him. Let every power of the soul expand on hearing the tender expressions which he addresses to you in the sacrament of the supper: *Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,* Matt. xi. 28. *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me,* Rev. iii. 20.

But, after all, it is not during the course of a transitory life, at least it is not while you consider death as still remote, that you are capable of knowing the pleasure there is in being a Christian. No, it is neither in the retirement of the closet, nor seated at the table of the Lord; it is not in your solemn feasts, that you are capable of relishing the sweetness which is to be found in beholding Jesus Christ, in embracing him, in believing on him: it is in the last moments of life; it is when stretched on a death-bed. Till then, your passions will sometimes call it in question, whether the man of the world do not actually enjoy more happiness than the Christian; whether the commerce of society, whether spectacles, play, the splendor of a court, do not confer more real pleasure than that which flows from communion with Jesus Christ.

But when you shall find yourselves, like Simeon, in a state of universal dereliction; but when you shall behold nothing around you save unavailing solicitudes, save ineffectual medicines, save fruitless tears, then you will know what the religion of Jesus Christ is; then, my brethren, you will taste the delight of being a Christian; then you will feel all the powerful attraction of that peace which is men-

tioned in the text: *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

May these ideas of the Christian religion attach us inviolably unto it. Let us, with Simeon, embrace the Saviour of the world; let us, with the wise men of the East, present unto him our gold, and frankincense, and myrrh: or rather, let us present unto him hearts penetrated with admiration, with gratitude, with love. Yes, divine Infant, *desire of all nations, glory of Israel,* Saviour of mankind; divine Infant, whom so many oracles have predicted, whom so many prophets have announced, whom so many types have represented, and whose radiant day so many kings and prophets were desirous to behold: my faith pierces through all those veils which overspread and conceal thee: I behold, in the person of a creature feeble and humbled, my God, and my Redeemer: I contemplate thee not only as born a few days ago at Bethlehem of Judah, but subsisting *before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth was formed, even from everlasting to everlasting,* Psalm xc. 2. I behold thee not only lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, but I behold thee seated on a throne of glory, *highly exalted,* having *a name that is above every name,* adored by angels and seraphims, encircled with rays of divinity.

Every power of my understanding shall henceforth be devoted to the knowledge of thee: it shall be my constant endeavor to please thee, my supreme delight to possess thee; and it shall be my noblest ambition to prostrate myself one day before thy throne, and to sing with the innumerable multitudes of the redeemed of every nation, and people, and tongue: *Unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be honor and glory, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON II.

CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiv. xv. xvi.

* *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me, &c.*

WE begin, this morning, with explaining to you the texts which refer to our blessed Saviour's passion. If the knowledge of the Christian be all reducible to this, *to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. it is impossible to fix your eyes too frequently on the mysteries of the cross. Very few discourses, accordingly, are addressed to you, in which these great objects are not brought forward to view. Nay more, it is the pleasure of this church, that, at certain stated seasons, the doctrine of the cross, to the exclusion of every other, should be the subject of our preaching: that all the circumstances attending it should be detailed, and every view of it displayed. But whatever powers may be applied to the execution

* Those who wish to derive benefit from the following discourse, must previously peruse, with attention, the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of John's gospel.

of this work, it cannot possibly be accomplished within the space of a few weeks. We have especially had to lament that our Saviour's last address to his disciples should be omitted. I mean the discourse which he addressed to them, a little while before he retired into the garden of Gethsemane, and which St. John has preserved to us in the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of his gospel. This part of the history of the passion is, unquestionably, one of the most tender and most interesting. We propose to make it pass in review before you this day, as far as the bounds prescribed to us will permit.

Were it proper to make the place where I stand a vehicle for communications of this kind, I am ready ingeniously to acknowledge, that a particular circumstance determined my choice on this occasion. A few days only have elapsed since I was called to be witness of the dying agonies of a valuable minister,* whom Providence has just removed from the superintendance of a neighboring church. God was pleased to visit him for some months past, if we may be presumed to speak so, with a *temptation* more than *is common to man*, 1 Cor. x. 13. but he granted him a fortitude more than human to support it. I was filled with astonishment at the violence of his sufferings; and still more at the patience with which he endured them: I could not help expressing a wish to know what particular article of religion had contributed the most to produce in him that prodigy of resolution: *Have you ever paid a closer attention, my dear brother*, said he to me, *to the last address of Jesus Christ to his disciples? My God*, exclaimed he, *what charity! what tenderness! but above*

* Mr. Begnon, pastor of the church at Leyden.

all, what an inexhaustible source of consolation in the extremity of distress! His words filled me with astonishment: my thoughts were immediately turned toward you, my dearly beloved brethren; and I said within myself, I must furnish my hearers with this powerful defence against suffering and death. I enter this day on the execution of my design. Condescend to concur with me in it. Come and meditate on the last expressions which fell from the lips of a dying Saviour: let us penetrate into the very centre of that heart which the sacred flame of charity animated.

I must proceed on the supposition that your minds are impressed with the subject of the three chapters of which I am going to attempt an analysis. The great object which our Lord proposes to himself, in his address, is to fortify his disciples against the temptations to which they were about to be exposed. And, in order to reduce our reflections to distinct classes, Jesus Christ means to fortify his disciples:

I. Against the offence of his cross.

II. Against the persecution which his doctrine was going to excite.

III. Against forgetfulness of his precepts.

IV. Against sorrow for his absence.

I. First, Jesus Christ means to fortify his disciples against the offence of the cross. A man must be a mere novice in the history of the gospel, if he knows not how extremely confused their ideas were with respect to the mystery of redemption. Those who ascribe to them superior illumination,

are mistaken both in the principle and in the consequences which they deduce from it. Their principle is, that the Jewish church was perfectly well acquainted with the whole mystery of the cross; an opinion supported by no historical monument whatever.

But granting we were to admit this principle, we must of necessity resist the consequence deduced from it, with respect to the Apostles. It is very possible to have a clouded understanding amidst a luminous dispensation, and to grovel in ignorance, be the age ever so enlightened. Had we a mind to demonstrate to what a degree the age in which we live surpasses those which preceded it, whether in physical discovery, or in metaphysical and theological speculation, would we go to collect our proofs among our common mechanics, or from among the fishermen who inhabit our seaports?

Let us call to remembrance the indiscreet zeal of Peter, when Jesus Christ declared to him, *how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things—and be killed*, Matt. xvi. 21. *be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*, ver. 22. Recollect the reply which Jesus made to that disciple: *get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me*, ver. 23. Recollect farther, the question which the Apostles put to their Master some time before his ascension: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* Acts i. 6. Above all, recollect the conversation which passed between certain of them immediately after his resurrection: *we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done*, Luke xxiv. 21. *You trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel!*

Well! and wherefore trust no longer? Whence, then, arises this diffidence? Wherein has his promise failed? What oracle of the prophets has he neglected to fulfil? *O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory,* ver. 25. 26.

Taking it for granted, then, that the Apostles had but confused ideas of the mystery of the cross, what offence must they not have taken, when they were called to be the witnesses of that fearful spectacle! From our being accustomed to hear the punishment of crucifixion spoken of in terms of high dignity, we lose sight of what was ignominious and humiliating in it. Represent to yourself a man whom you had made the centre, the fixed point of all your hopes. Represent to yourself a man, a God man, to whom you had been accustomed to yield all the homage of adoration: represent to yourself this divine personage, whom you believed to have descended from heaven to remedy the woes of mankind; to remove your private distresses; to re-establish your credit, and to restore to your country all its splendor and all its importance: represent to yourself this divine personage bound by the hands of an insolent rabble; dragged along from one tribunal to another; condemned as a felon, and nailed to a tree. Can this be that Messiah, into whose hand God was to put *a rod of iron, to break the nations, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel?* Psa. ii. 9. Can this be that Messiah, who should *have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth?* Psa. lxxii. 8. Can this be the Messiah, who was to make us *sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel?* Luke xxii. 30. As this was the grand

offence with the Apostles, their Master supplies them with more than one buckler to repel it.

1. The first buckler for repelling the offence of the cross—the miserable condition of a lost world. *I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you,* chap. xvi. 7. Had not Jesus Christ been offered in sacrifice, there had been no Comforter, and no consolation for the wretched posterity of Adam. The anger of a righteous God was kindled against them. They had nothing to look for from heaven but thunderbolts, and *an horrible tempest* to crush their guilty heads. On the cross it was that Jesus Christ restored a blessed correspondence between heaven and earth: *for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell: and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven,* Col. i. 19, 20.

2. The second buckler against the offence of the cross—the downfall of the enemy of mankind; I mean the Devil and his angels: *the prince of this world is judged,* ch. xiv. 30, xvi. 11. The crucifixion of the Redeemer of the world, it is true, seemed to complete the triumph of Satan, but it was, in reality, precisely the point of his decline and fall. He *bruised the heel* of the promised seed, but Jesus Christ *bruised his head,* Gen. iii. 15. On the cross it was that Jesus executed the design of his coming into the world, namely, to *destroy the works of the Devil,* 1 Jo. iii. 8. On the cross it was that Jesus Christ poured out the precious blood which was going to become the true seed of the church. On the cross it was that he dashed down to the ground the trophies of idolatry, and there he *spoiled principalities and powers, and*

made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, Col. ii. 15.

3. The third buckler against the offence of the cross—the sovereign command of his heavenly Father; *the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do*, chap. xiv. 30, 31. What was the commandment given of the Father to Jesus Christ? You know it, my brethren; the commission which he had given him, was to deliver from the dreadful abysses of hell a world of miserable wretches, whom divine justice had there doomed to undergo the punishment of everlasting fire. This was the supreme will which the Redeemer had continually before his eyes. For this it was, that he saith when he cometh into the world: *sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: but a body hast thou prepared for me: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God*, Ps. xl. 6, 7, 8. For this it was, that dismayed and cast down, as it were, to the ground at Gethsemane, at the bare apprehension of approaching sufferings, he prayed, saying: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, but immediately added, *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*, Matt. xxvi. 39.

4. The fourth buckler against the offence of the cross—the idea of the storm which was ready to burst on the authors of those sufferings, and upon a whole guilty nation which had obstinately rejected his ministry: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also*, ch. xv. 22, 23. This parricide

filled up the measure of the incredulity and barbarity of the Jews: it was going to put the last hand to an accumulation of criminality. But let not the impatience of the flesh hurry the spirit into the formation of precipitate judgment: let not the libertine and the profane here display their abominable system: let them not say, as they point to the cross of the Saviour, on which innocence is immolated to iniquity, Where is that Providence which guides the helm of the universe? Where are those eyes which go up and down through the earth, to contemplate the actions of men? Where is that righteous Judge of all the earth, ever ready to administer justice? Have a little patience, and you shall see that as this parricide constituted the most atrocious of all crimes, it was likewise speedily followed by the most tremendous of all punishments. You shall behold the accomplishment of the prophetic denunciation: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children*, Luke xxiii. 28. You shall behold the Jews driven to desperation, imploring assistance from the rocks and from the mountains, to shelter them from the strokes of that divine vengeance which pursues them: you shall behold that Jerusalem, that murderess of the prophets, deluged with her own blood: two millions of Jews offered in sacrifice to the justice of that God, who requires at their hands the blood of the Messiah.

5. The fifth buckler against the offence of the cross—the spectacle of charity which Jesus Christ presents to his disciples: *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*, ch. xv. 13. Accordingly, when this divine Saviour had arrived at the period of his death, and had formed, if I may use the expression, the

ultimate resolution to die, every flood-gate of his charity is set open: from this fountain of love, whence emanated the heroic purpose of immolating himself for his disciples, we behold every other proof of affection gushing out in copious streams: *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,* ch. xv. 15. If you have been faithful to me while I was giving you strong proofs of my tenderness, is it possible you should be unfaithful, now that I am preparing to give you a demonstration of it still more irresistible? Is it possible you should choose the time of my crucifixion to betray me? Is it possible you should deny your Redeemer, precisely at the moment when he is dying to accomplish the work of your redemption?

II. Our blessed Lord having spoken to the disciples, of the cross which he was about to suffer, and this is the second article of meditation, proceeds to speak to them concerning their own. He disguises not either the horror or the weight of it: *These things I have spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service,* ch. xvi. 1, 2. But while he utters a prediction so melancholy and discouraging, he softens it, and supplies them with motives the best adapted to fortify and sustain them against the fearful accomplishment of it. The objects which Jesus Christ presents to the eyes of his disciples, in the three chapters which we are attempting to analize, are the same which have supported our own martyrs and confessors in this age of fire and blood

when the enemies of religion have taken for their models the persecutors of Christ and of his apostles.

I suffer, I die for the gospel, said our confessors and martyrs within themselves, in the extremity of their sufferings: I suffer, I die for the gospel; it is my highest glory; it is my badge of conformity to my adorable Saviour; *I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh*, Col. i. 24. *I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, Gal. vi. 17. It is one of the motives which our Lord himself proposes to his apostles: *if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. The servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you*, ch. xv. 18, 20.

I suffer, I die for the gospel. The world places before me a theatre of misery and persecution only. But it is because I am not of this world I am looking and longing for another establishment of things, and every stroke aimed at me by the men of the world, is a pledge of my being a citizen of another, of a heavenly country. This is a farther motive suggested by Jesus Christ to his disciples: *if ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*, ch. xv. 19.

I suffer, I die for the gospel. How glorious it is for a man to devote himself in such a cause! How glorious it is to be the martyr of truth and of virtue! Our Lord suggests this likewise as a motive to his disciples: *all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him who sent me*, ch. xv. 21.

I suffer, I die for the gospel; but God is witness of my sufferings and death: he feels every stroke which falls upon me: *he who toucheth me toucheth*

the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. And as he is the witness of the barbarity of my tormenters, he will likewise be the judge and the avenger. This likewise is a motive suggested by our Lord to his disciples: *he that hateth me hateth my Father also*, ch. xv. 23.

I suffer, I die for the gospel: but I have before my eyes the great pattern of patience and fortitude. I derive the support which I need from the same source whence my Saviour derived his: I look to *the Author and Finisher of my faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame*, Heb. xii. 2. and I aspire after the same triumph. This is a motive suggested by Jesus Christ to his disciples: *in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, ch. xvi. 33. What cross would not appear light, when the mind is supported by motives so powerful?

III. We observed, in the third place, that our blessed Lord is, in this address, cautioning his disciples against forgetfulness of his commandments. The presence of a good pastor is a bulwark against error and vice. The respect which he commands by his exemplary conduct, and the lustre which his superior intelligence diffuses, impress truth upon the understanding, and transfuse virtue into the heart. He has his eyes ever open upon the various avenues through which the enemy could find admission into the field of the Lord, to sow it with tares, and by the exercise of constant vigilance, defeats the cunning of the wicked one.

Conformably to this idea, one of the most grievous solicitudes which, at a dying hour, have oppressed the minds of those extraordinary men to whom God committed the oversight of his church,

proceeded from the apprehension of that corruption into which their charge was in danger of falling after their own departure: and the object of their most anxious concern has been to prevent this. Behold Moses approaching the last closing scene of Life: *Take this book of the law*, says he to the Levites, *and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee: for I know thy rebellion and thy stiff-neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?* Deut. xxxi. 26, 27. Behold St. Paul: Consider the terrors which he feels as he prepares to go up to Jerusalem: it is not that of being made a partaker of his Master's sufferings: *no*, says he, *the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me* at Jerusalem. *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 23, 24. But that which fills him with painful apprehension, is the danger of apostatizing, to which his beloved Ephesians, among whom he has been so successful, were going to be exposed after he had left them: for this reason it is that in bidding them a final adieu, he expresses an ardent wish that a last effort should indelibly impress on their hearts the great truths which had been the subject of his ministry among them: *I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which*

he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, Acts xx. 26—29.

Jesus Christ, in like manner, is ready to finish the work which his heavenly Father has given him to do: he shrinks from it no longer: he advances forward, braving the cross, being *now ready to be offered,* 2 Tim. iv. 6. *Arise,* says he to them, *arise;* (he was still in the house where he had just eaten the passover, when he pronounced the discourse which we are endeavoring to explain) *let us go hence,* ch. xiv. 31. I must pass no more time with my beloved disciples; I am going to be delivered up to my executioners: I must *no more drink* with you *of the fruit of the vine,* Luke xxii. 18. in a feast of love; it is time for me to go and drink to the very dregs the cup which the justice of my Father is putting into my hands: *let us go hence:* let us go to Gethsemane: let us ascend to Golgotha. But, *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,* Luke xxii. 31. *But, all ye shall be offended because of me this night,* Matt. xxvi. 31. But, the Devil, and the world, and all hell, are going to unite their efforts to dissolve your communion with me. What does he oppose to danger so threatening? What means does he employ to prevent it? What ought to be done by a good pastor when stretched on a death-bed: not only earnest prayers addressed to heaven, but also tender exhortations addressed to men. He gives them an abridgement of the sermons which, during the period of his intercourse with them, had been the subject of his ministrations: *if ye love me, keep my commandments,* ch. xiv. 15.

But what merits special attention in the last ad-

dress of Jesus Christ to his apostles, is the precept on which he particularly insists: and the subject of that precept is charity: *by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*, ch. xiii. 35. *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*, ver. 34. a precept which they were bound to observe as Christians, and more especially as ministers of his gospel.

1. As Christians. Without charity Christianity cannot possibly subsist. A society, the individuals of which do not love each other, cannot be a society of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Tell me not of your passing whole days and nights in meditation and reading the scriptures; of your uninterrupted assiduity in exercises of devotion; of your fervor and frequency of attendance at the table of the Lord. The question still recurs, Where is thy charity? Lovest thou thy neighbor? Makest thou his interests thy own? Is his prosperity a source of satisfaction to thee? Canst thou bear with and overlook his infirmities? Respectest thou, recommendest thou his excellencies? Defendest thou his reputation? Laborest thou to promote his salvation? Such questions are so many touchstones to assist us in attaining the knowledge of ourselves: so many articles of condemnation to multitudes who bear the Christian name. Of charity, alas, little more is known than the name: and the whole amount of the practice of it, is reduced to a few of the functions altogether inseparable from mere humanity: when a man has given away a small portion of his superfluity to relieve the poor: when he has bestowed a morsel of bread to feed that starving wretch: when he has covered those shivering limbs from the inclemency of the air, he

considers himself as having satisfied the demands of charity: he founds, shall I venture to say it? he founds on this system of love a title to warrant his indifference, his vengeance, his hatred: he backbites without control, he calumniates without hesitation: he plunges the dagger without remorse: he pines at the prosperity of another, and his neighbor's glory clothes him with shame.

2. But if the disciples of Jesus Christ are engaged as Christians to love one another, they more especially are so as ministers of the gospel. Where are we to look for charity, if not in the heart of those who are the heralds of charity? What monster so detestable as a minister destitute of charity? The more that charity is inculcated by the religion which he professes to teach, the more it must expose him as a most unnatural being, if he is capable of resisting the power of motives so tender. The more venerable that his ministry is, the more liable must it be to suspicion and contempt, when exercised by a man who is himself a stranger to charity. He will wrap the truths of religion according to seasons and circumstances: he will accommodate his preaching to his interest: he will carry his passions with him into the pulpit: he will conceal the heart of a wolf under the clothing of a sheep, and will avail himself of the law of charity itself to diffuse through the whole church the pestilential air of that hatred, animosity, envy, which torment and prey upon his own mind.

It was, in a peculiar manner, the desire of Jesus Christ, that charity should be the reigning principle in the college of the apostles: that united together in bands of the tenderest affection, they might lend each other effectual support in the great work of publishing the gospel. Never does the Devil labor with more success against a church, than when he

acquires the power of disuniting the ministers who have the oversight of it. Call to the pastoral charge of a flock, persons of the greatest celebrity, preachers the most eloquent, geniuses the most transcendent, unless they are closely united in the bands of charity, small will be their progress: they will separate the hearts which they were bound to unite: they will foster the spirit of party: they will encourage the fomenters of discord: they will instruct one to say, *I am of Paul;* and another, *I am of Cephas;* and another, *I am of Apollos,* 1 Cor. iii. 4. They will be in constant mutual opposition. Apollos will do his utmost to pull down what Cephas has built: Cephas will attempt to rear what Paul had demolished. Discover the art, on the contrary, of uniting the hearts of those who have the care of a flock, and you ensure their success: they will strengthen each other's hands: they will attack the common enemy with concentrated force: they will concur in pursuing the same object. *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* O Charity! the livery of the disciples of Jesus Christ, must it needs be that thou shouldst be as rare as thou art indispensable! Banished from the rest of the universe, flee for refuge to the church. Exert thy sovereign power at least in the sanctuary. Bind together, in bands of indissoluble affection, the shepherds of this flock. Let all animosity, let discord, let envy, be for ever banished from the midst of us, my beloved companions in *the work of the ministry,* Eph. iv. 12. Amen.

CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

PART II.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

IV. THE fourth and last great end which our blessed Lord had in view, in addressing this farewel discourse to his disciples, was to furnish them with supplies of consolation under the sorrow which his absence was going to excite in them. This sorrow is one of those dispositions of the soul which no powers of language are capable of expressing. The apostles tenderly loved their Master. Though the history of their life had not conveyed to us this idea of them; though the gospel had not traced, for our information, certain particular traits of their affection; had nothing been mentioned of the tenderness of the disciple whom Jesus loved; nothing of the vehemence of St. Peter, always ready to kindle into a flame, when the glory and the life of his master were concerned, the very nature of the thing would be sufficient to give us the assurance of it. Who could have known Jesus Christ without loving him?

Is it possible to conceive the idea of a character more amiable? Have you found in the history of

those excellent ones, who were the delight of mankind; or even in the productions of those who have communicated to us imaginary ideas of excellency and perfection, have you found in these higher instances of delicacy, of magnanimity, of cordial affection? If it be impossible for you to apply your thoughts to this great object without being transported, what must have been the feelings of the disciples? Continual hearers of the gracious words which fell from the lips of the blessed Jesus, the constant witnesses of his virtues, the spectators of his wonderful works, admitted to the most intimate familiarity with him, and honored with the most unbounded confidence, What must have been the love to him that inflamed their hearts? Now this is the gracious Master, this the delicious intercourse, this the tender-hearted Friend whom they are going to lose.

What charm can the world possess after we have had the infelicity of surviving certain persons who were dear to us? No, neither the mourning of Joseph, when he accompanied with tears to *the threshing-floor of Atad*, the coffin of Jacob, his father, Gen. l. 10. no, nor the loud lamentation of David, when he exclaimed in an agony of woe: *O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee: O Absalom, my son, my son!* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. no, nor the anguish of Rachel, *weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not*, Matt. ii. 18. No, nothing is capable of conveying an idea of the condition to which the disciples were going to be reduced on beholding their Master expire. One must have survived Jesus Christ in order to be sensible what it is to survive Jesus Christ. This fatal stroke was to become to them an inexhaustible fountain of tears. This death appeared to them the utter an-

nihilation of all things: it seems as if the whole universe were dying together with him. *Now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts*, ch. xvi. 5, 6. *A little while, and ye shall not see me*, ver. 16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful*, ver. 20.

There can be no room to doubt that Jesus Christ, who himself loves with so much delicacy of affection, and who was animated with such a predilection in behalf of his disciples, tenderly participated in their sorrow. As the loss, which they were about to sustain, was the deepest wound in their soul, he pours into it the most powerful balm of divine consolation. And here, my dearly beloved brethren, here it is that I stand in need of not all the attention of your intellectual powers, but of all the sensibility of which your heart is susceptible, that while you partake in the sorrow of the apostles, you may likewise partake with them in the consolation which their Lord and ours was pleased to administer.

I shall sometimes turn aside from those holy men, my dear hearers, to address myself to you, and to supply you with abundant consolation under the most oppressive ills which you may be called to endure on the earth, I mean, under the loss of those who were most dear to you in life. I could wish to convince you that the Christian religion is *profitable for all things:* that it will serve us as a bulwark and a refuge in our greatest sorrows, if we have but the wisdom to resort to it. Only take care to apply, every one to his own particular situation, the truths which I am going to propose to you. Derive your consolation from the same

sources which Jesus Christ opened to his disciples, and to a participation of which we now, after his example, cordially invite you: prayer; the mission of the Comforter; the place to which your Redeemer is gone; the foretastes of the glory which he is there preparing for you; his spiritual presence in the midst of you; and the certainty and nearness of his return.

1. In all your distresses have recourse to prayer. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,* ch. xvi. 23, 24. This ought to be adopted as a new form of prayer in the Christian world. Scarcely do we find any trace of it in the devotions of the faithful of ancient times. They indeed sometimes introduced the names of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob: but no where, except in the prophecy of Daniel, do we find a prayer put up in the name of the Messiah. This at least is the sense which may be assigned to those words of that prophet: *now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, that is desolate, for the Lord's sake,* Dan. ix. 17.

But this unexampled form, or of which there is, at most, so few examples in the ancient church, was to be henceforward adopted by all Christians: it is the first source of consolation which Christ opened to his disciples, and it is likewise the first which we, after him, would propose to you. Perhaps there may be many among us, to whom Jesus might still say, as formerly to his disciples, *hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.* To pray, and to pray in the name of Christ, is the Christian's grand resource. Resort to it in all your

tribulations. Have you reason to apprehend that some stroke from the hand of God is going to fall heavy upon you? Do you believe yourself on the eve of hearing some melancholy tidings? Are you called to undergo some painful and dangerous operation on your person? And, to say every thing in one word, are you threatened with the loss of the most valuable, the most generous, the most tender friend that heaven could bestow? Have recourse to prayer: God still subsists when all things else have become dead to thee. God continueth to hear thee, when death has reduced to a state of insensibility all that was dear to thee. Retire to thy closet: prostrate thyself at the footstool of the throne of the Father of mercies. Pour out your heart into his bosom: say to him: *O Lord my strength, teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*, Psa. cxliv. 1. Lord, take pity on thy creature: Lord, proportion my trials to the strength thou shall be pleased to administer to sustain them: *O my God, hear the prayer of thy servant; cause thy face to shine upon me, for the Lord's sake*, Dan. ix. 17. This exercise, my friend, will render thee invulnerable: this exercise will communicate strength, on which thou mayest, with confidence, rely, far beyond what thou durst have expected: it will place thee under the shadow of the Almighty, and will establish thee *as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever*, Psa. cxxv. 1.

2. In all your distresses call to remembrance the promise of the Comforter, which Jesus Christ gave to his disciples: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter; that he may abide with you for ever*, chap. xiv. 16. This promise contained something peculiar, relatively to the apostles, and to the then state of the infant

church. It denoted the economy of miracles, which was not to commence till Jesus Christ had re-ascended into heaven; and this is precisely the meaning of these words: *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you*, ch. xvi. 7. It is likewise the meaning to be assigned to that passage: *verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father*, ch. xiv. 12. By *the works* which the apostles were to do, we understand miracles. These *works* were to be *greater* than the works of Jesus Christ, with respect to their duration, and with respect to the number of witnesses in whose presence they were to be performed.

This is, farther, the idea which we are to affix to those other words of our Saviour: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*, chap. xvi. 12, 13. This refers to those extraordinary gifts which the Holy Spirit was to pour down upon the apostles, the aid of inspiration, and the grace of infallibility, which were going to be communicated to them. It is likewise of those peculiar circumstances, that we must explain the effects which Jesus Christ ascribes to that Spirit whom he promises to send to his disciples: *and, when he, the Comforter, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me*, chap. xvi. 8, 9, or, as it might have been translated, *he shall convince them of their criminality, in refusing to believe on me:* in other words, that the mission of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ had promised to his disciples, should be a new proof of the divinity of his own mission, and should render those

persons inexcusable who presumed to call it in question.

Again, *he shall reprove them of righteousness, because I go to my Father*, ver. 10. that is, the miraculous gifts communicated to the first heralds of the gospel, should demonstrate, in a sensible manner, that Jesus Christ was in heaven, and should, from that very circumstance, evince that he was perfectly *righteous*, although he had been condemned as an impostor, seeing that God had thus exalted him to the highest pinnacle of glory.

Once more, *he shall reprove them of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*, ver. 11. in other words, that the triumphs which the Christian religion was about to obtain, through the miraculous endowments of its ministers, were to be an awful forerunner of the judgments which should overtake those who persisted in their unbelief. All this is peculiar to the apostles: all this relates to the circumstances of the primitive church.

But this promise, my beloved brethren, has a reference to us also; and let it be our support in the midst of tribulation. Jesus Christ has promised us also *the Comforter*. His spirit is within us: *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*, 1 John, iv. 4. Let us yield ourselves to the guidance of this spirit: he will not grant us to exercise authority over insensible beings; to control the powers of nature, and to rule the elements: but he will exalt us to a glorious superiority over flesh and blood; he will support us under every pressure of calamity, and make us *more than conquerers* over every foe.

3. In all your distresses, call to remembrance the place to which Jesus Christ is gone. *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father*, chap. xiv. 28. It is the desire of

Jesus Christ, that his disciples, on being separated from him, should not confine their thoughts to their own interest merely. It is his wish that the glory to which he was about to be exalted, should sweeten to them the bitterness of separation. Jesus Christ teaches us how to love. We frequently imagine that we are inspired with love to a person cruciated with agonizing pain, whereas it is only self-love in disguise. When death has removed a person who was justly dear to us, we dwell only on the loss which we have sustained, but make no account of what our friend has gained. Whence proceed those tears which stream from your eyes? Whence these sighs and sobbings? What dreadful event can thus have rent your heart, and excited those piercing shrieks which rend the air? You have just beheld one who was the object of your tenderest affection, depart out of this valley of tears: he has breathed out his soul in the hands of his Creator: and the blessed *angels*, who *rejoice over a sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 10. experience new transports of delight, when a believer who had been combating under the banner of the cross of Christ, comes to be admitted to a participation in his triumph: and can you consider this as a ground of affliction to you? Do you call this love? No: you know not how to love.

Ah! if the departed could see what is passing below the sun! If the supreme order of the Almighty would permit those who are in heaven to maintain a communication with their surviving friends on the earth! the person, whose loss you so bitterly deplore, would reproach you with that excess of grief. He would address you in the words of the Saviour to his disciples: *if you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I.* Would

you tear me from the bosom of that Father? Would you recall me to this scene of tribulation and distress? Do you wish to see me again struggling with the calamities which are inseparable from the life of wretched mortals?

But there is something farther which challenges our attention. All that our blessed Lord has done for himself, has an intimate relation to us. All the glory which rests on our illustrious Head, extends its influence to each of its members. All the parts of the economy into which he has entered for our salvation, have a direct reference to our salvation. *He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* He *is even at the right hand of God,* where *he also maketh intercession for us,* Rom. iv. 25 viii. 34. In all your distresses, reflect, not only on the place to which Christ is gone, but likewise on what he hath thither gone to do on your behalf. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you,* chap. xiv. 2. God no longer dwells in *light which no man can approach unto,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. Direct your eyes to heaven. There are no longer *cherubims and a flaming sword,* Gen. iii. 24. to obstruct your passage. *Wither I go ye know, and the way ye know: . . . .* Jesus Christ is *the way, and the truth, and the life,* ch. xiv. 4, 6. Keep but yourselves closely united to the Redeemer in the hour of tribulation; place continually before your eyes this model of patient suffering, and he will himself conduct you to those mansions of glory.

4. But an impenetrable veil conceals from your eyes those mansions in our Father's house: but there is an infinite distance between this little corner of the world, into which God has been pleased

to send us, as into a state of exile, and the place which Christ is preparing for us. God is still, with respect to us, *a strong God, who hideth himself*, Isa. xlv. 15. Well, you must learn to look through that veil. You must learn to fill up the mighty void which is between heaven and earth, and to see this God who still conceals himself from our eyes. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. The Christian is instructed to unite the present to futurity. The Christian is instructed to anticipate periods the most remote. The Christian is a man already *quickened together with Christ; already glorified; already seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 5. How so? By the foretastes of those blessings which are the object of his expectations. This is the fourth source of the consolation which our Lord opens to his disciples, and which we, after him, open unto you. *From henceforth, ye know the Father, and have seen him: he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you*, chap. xiv. 7, 9, 27.

My soul, if these are mere empty ideas with respect to thee, to thyself alone is the evil to be imputed. Thou hast corrupted thy taste: thou art plunging thyself in the world: distracting thyself with its projects: eagerly hunting after its pleasures: thou art suffering thyself to be facinated with its charms: thou art devoting no portion of thy immortal capacity to the perception of that delight which the regenerated man enjoys, when he can say to himself, "*I know the Father:* he is such as I know the Son to be, full of love, full of charity, full of goodness and long-suffering. Jesus Christ has *left me his peace:* I bear within me

the testimony of *a conscience void of offence:* I gave myself up to the joy of reflecting that my salvation is secure." Thou renderest thyself insensible to these sublime attractions: and then, when the world betrays thee; when thy *gods are taken away from thee*, Jud. xviii. 24. when thou art bent on every side with a *great fight of affliction*, thou findest thyself destitute of every resource. Reform thy depraved taste. Call down Paradise to reside within thee: anticipate that glorious period, when thou *shalt see God as he is*, 1 Jo. iii. 2. Call to remembrance these words of thy Saviour: *From henceforth ye know the Father, and have seen him: he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

5. There is a fifth source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples, and which we, after him, disclose unto you. It is the assurance of his spiritual presence, and of the presence of his heavenly Father, in the midst of you. *I will not leave you comfortless*, or, as it might have been rendered, I will not leave you *orphans . . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*, chap. xiv. 18, 23. In all your distresses, call to remembrance, that God is with you of a truth. With what fortitude did this reflection inspire those holy men whom the scriptures have proposed to us as models!

With what fortitude was Moses animated by it! *Wherein shall it be known here*, said of old time that eminent servant of God, *that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated,*

I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth, Ex. xxxiii. 16. With what fortitude did it animate the prophet, when he said, *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up*, Psa. xxvii. 10. With what fortitude did it inspire Jesus Christ himself, under that universal desertion which he experienced at the hour of death! *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me*, ch. xvi. 32.

Let us never lose sight of God in the day of adversity. Let us ever dwell with complacency and joy on that expression of the Redeemer, *I will not leave you orphans*. Let us apply to ourselves what God said of his ancient people: *Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them*, Isa. lxiii. 8, 9. and let us exult in the fulness of a Christian confidence: *I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved*, Psa. xvi. 8.

6. Finally, the last source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples, and which we, after his example, would disclose unto you, is the nearness of his return. *Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*, chap. xvi. 22. In all your distresses, call to remembrance, that if Jesus Christ be not now sensibly present in the midst of you, the time is at hand when he will certainly be so. Call to remembrance what the angels said unto the apostles, when lost in astonishment at beholding a cloud receive him out of their sight: *Ye men of Galilee,*

why stand ye gazing up into heaven: this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven, Acts. i. 11. Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ will quickly re-appear: *Yet a little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry,* Heb. x. 37.

No, this economy is not made for eternity. The world is waxing old: our years are hastening to fill up their measure: we are advancing with rapid strides towards the tomb. The decorations of the universe are speedily to be changed with respect to us. The universe itself is about to undergo a real change. The state of the world, that now is, presents a state of violence, which cannot be of long duration. The last trumpet must ere long utter its voice: yet a little while, and those thunders must be heard which shall shake the pillars of the earth: *Arise, ye dead,* and leave your tombs. Yet a little while, and we shall see again those whose death has cost us so many tears, and we shall be re-united to them. Yet a little while, and *the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven,* Matt. xxiv. 30. Yet a little while, and this *Son of Man* shall himself appear in *his own,* and in his *Father's glory, with all his holy angels.*

Ah! my brethren, till that blessed period arrive, we dare not promise you the possession of *the fulness of joy.* Till that blessed period, Church of Jesus Christ, *thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,* Isa. liv. 2. a fearful night must involve thee in thick darkness. Till that blessed period, weep, weep, dejected Christian, disciple of the crucified Jesus, weep and *lament,* and let *the world rejoice, because ye are sorrowful: but* ere long, *your sorrow shall be turned into joy . . . .*

I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

What powers of thought are equal to a happy termination of this subject of meditation! What pencil is capable of depicting the joy of the sons of God in that eventful day, in which they shall behold again, in which they shall embrace, a father, a friend, a child, from whom death had once separated them! Let imagination soar to the highest objects which the mind is capable of contemplating. Let nothing divide the love which we entirely owe to our adorable Redeemer, or damp the delight which we derive from the exalted hope of seeing him return to us in the clouds of heaven, with his *angels that excel in strength.*

Who is capable of representing the transport which the return of this Jesus shall kindle in the bosom of the faithful! "There he is, that Jesus whom we loved, and to whom we were *faithful, even unto death.* Come, Redeemer of our souls, come and wipe away the tears which thy departure drew from our eyes: come, and compensate to us the heaviness of so long a separation from thee: come and receive the effusions of our gratitude and joy: suffer us, suffer us to yield to the transports of that love which absorbs every faculty, which constrains us, which exalts us to seraphic ardor."

This is the last source of consolation which Jesus Christ disclosed to his disciples; this is, that consolation which flows out in copious streams toward you, Christian confounded, overwhelmed with wave upon wave, in all thy fears, thy sorrows, thy sufferings. O religion of the blessed Jesus, how powerful are thy attractions! What charms dost thou possess for a wretched creature, who feels the whole earth a cheerless void! Let this religion, my beloved brethren, be the object of our most ardent

affection: let us go on unto perfection: let us transmit it to our children, as the goodliest portion, as the fairest inheritance. Let us live with Jesus Christ. Let us die with Jesus Christ. May God grant us this supreme felicity. To him be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL PRAYER.

JOHN xvii.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctified myself, that they also might be santified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

THE words of dying persons usually sink deep into the listening ear, and touch the inmost soul. Ah, why are not the impressions, which they produce, as lasting as they are lively! The words of a dying pastor more especially, seem calculated to produce an extraordinary effect. At these last solemn moments of life, every motive of self-interest or of vain-glory, by which he might have been actuated through the course of his ministry, vanishes away. Then it is that a faithful minister derives from the bosom of that religion which he has taught to others, the means of fortifying himself against the idea of a futurity all gloom, if a man has mere human reason for his only guide, but all light and joy to him who follows the spirit of revelation. Then it is that he feels a more particular concern and tenderness for

the church, and that now, himself lifted up, he would draw all men after him.

When it is a pastor of the ordinary rate that expires, no other consequence can be deduced from his preseverance to the last but this, that he had preached what he believed to be the truth, not what was so in fact. And it is possible he may deceive himself when he is dying, as he pretended not to infallibility while he lived. But the death of those extraordinary men, who have established, by their testimony, the facts on which all religion rests, is the touchstone of the doctrines which they taught. As it was impossible they should have been deceived in the points which they attest, there can remain no other suspicion to affect their testimony, but this, that it was their intention to impose upon others: and this suspicion falls to the ground when we behold them, without deviation, persisting to the end in the faith which they professed, attesting it by new appeals to heaven, calling God to witness their sincerity, and their innocence.

All these different considerations unite in the person of Jesus Christ: all these motives to attention, and in an order infinitely superior, fix our meditation on the words which have been read. Come and behold the sentiments of your Saviour unfolded without disguise: come and behold the most lovely display of the human soul that ever was exhibited: come and behold whether he for one moment doubted, whether he shrunk back: above all, come and behold the charity by which he was animated. Charity formed the plan of the sacrifice which he should offer, and charity is hastening to accomplish it. Every thought of this dying Jesus is employed on his disciples; is employed about you, my beloved brethren. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. I pray for*

them. I pray for those whom thou hast given me. keep them through thine own name. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

Such are the objects, my friends, which I would this day present to your contemplation. I put aside all the theological controversies which have taken their rise from the passage under review My only aim shall be to recommend to your most serious attention the expressions, one after another, the heart-affecting, the penetrating expressions of the dying Saviour of mankind. So far from going abroad in quest of enemies to combat, I could even wish to confine my address, at the present hour, to such of my hearers as have a heart susceptible of those tender sentiments with which the religion of Jesus Christ inspires all who cordially embrace it. On hearts possessed of such sensibility I could wish to engrave the last expressions of the Redeemer's love. I could wish this sermon might accompany you up to your dying hour: I could wish that, in the moment of expiring agony, you might be enabled to oppose to the fearful threats of the king of terrors, these fervent petitions of the Saviour of the world, which set open to you the gates of heaven, and which establish your eternal felicity on a foundation more unmoveable than those of heaven and earth: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* Amen.

We shall arrange our subject in the order of the three following ideas, and shall endeavor to point out to you:

I. The relation in which Jesus Christ stands to God.

II. The relation which subsists between the apostles and Jesus Christ.

III. The relation subsisting between believers and the apostles.

We shall distinguish these three ideas, only for the purpose of afterwards establishing, and sublimating the mystery of their union. For the perfect obedience which Jesus Christ yielded to the supreme will of his heavenly Father, has united him to God in a manner ineffable, so that he is *one with God*, not only as partaking of the divine nature, but considered as a creature.

Again, the glorious manner in which the apostles have executed the functions of their apostleship, having not only believed the doctrines which their Master taught them, but diffused them over the whole world, and like him, sealed them with their own blood, has united them in the closest intimacy with Jesus Christ, so that they are *one with him*, as *Jesus Christ is one with the Father*.

Finally, the respect with which believers receive, and acquiesce in, the doctrine of the apostles, and that of Jesus Christ, raises them to a participation of the same exalted glory and felicity; so that believers being united with the apostles, the apostles with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ with God, there results from this union, a society, a whole, noble, sublime, possessing the perfection of glory and blessedness. Now, it is the complete union of this whole, it is the perfection of this communion among all these orders of being, that Jesus Christ here asks of the Father.

I. Let us, first, examine the relations in which Jesus Christ stands to God. Jesus Christ may be

considered under two different ideas, as God, and as Mediator. There are, accordingly, two kinds of relation subsisting between God and Jesus Christ; 1. a relation of nature; and 2. a relation of economy. Jesus Christ as God is *one with the Father;* he is likewise so in his character of Mediator.

1. There subsists between God and Christ, a unity of nature. We perceive more than one proof of this in the words of my text. For what are we to understand by *that glory* of which Jesus Christ speaks, which he *had with the Father before the world was*, unless it be that he is God, as the Father is God.

I am well aware, that in the very chapter we are attempting to explain, some have pretended to discover an argument which militates against this doctrine. The enemies of the divinity of our blessed Lord, have frequently employed the words which we have recited, as a bulwark to defend their error: *this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, ver. 3. They tell us, that Jesus Christ here distinguishes himself from *the true God*, and they have thence concluded, that he is of a different nature. But it is an easy matter to refute this objection, by permitting Jesus Christ to explain his own meaning, and interpreting scripture by scripture. Let us, from other passages, see how Jesus Christ has distinguished himself from the true God. Is it because he is not the true God? By no means; for it is expressly declared in another place, that he is *the true God, and eternal life*, 1 John. v. 20.

If then, Jesus Christ has referred to two classes, every branch of Christian knowledge: if he has placed in one class, the knowledge relating to *the true God*, and in the other class, all knowledge re-

lating to the Son, whom the true God *has sent* into the world, this is simply reducing the whole of Christian Theology to the two great questions which were the subject of discussion in his time, and which contained a summary of all the topics which can be discussed on the subject of religion. The first was the point in dispute between the Pagan and the Jew: the other, between the Jew and the Christian.

The matter in dispute between the Pagan and the Jew, was, whether there were *only one God*, or more than one. Respecting this question, Jesus Christ pronounces a clear decision; that *eternal life consists in knowing the one true God.* The point in dispute between the Jew and the Christian, related to Christ's being the Messiah, the *sent* of God. But this Jesus, whom God *has sent*, is he God Creator, or is he a creature merely? Neither the negative nor the affirmative side of this question is directly established in these words: *this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.* Once admit what Jesus Christ demands on the subject of the first two questions, and the third will presently resolve itself. For if we know that there is only one God, and that Jesus Christ is *sent* by him, we must receive, without hesitation, the doctrine which God has taught us by his Son, whom he hath sent: and if we receive this doctrine, we must believe, from the doctrine itself, that he who is *sent*, must be God: because the divinity of his nature is one point of the doctrine which he hath taught.

There are, therefore, relations of nature between Jesus Christ and God. There is a unity of Jesus Christ as God with his Father. There is a *glory* which Jesus Christ *had with God before the world was*, and which he always possessed, even at the

period of his deepest humiliation. This unity is as unchangeable as deity itself. The glory which Jesus Christ derives from it, is not susceptible of increase or dimunition. All that he prays for in respect to it, is, that it might be known among men: and in this sense we may understand the expressions in our text: *Father, glorify me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*, ver. 5. But,

2. There subsists likewise a relation of economy between Jesus Christ and the Father. Jesus Christ as Mediator, is *one with God*. I have a conception of three kinds of unity in this respect: 1. unity of idea: 2. unity of will: 3. unity of dominion.

(1) There is a unity of idea. I mean, that the human soul of Jesus Christ Mediator was endowed with so much intelligence, that he had the same ideas with God; that he formed the same judgments, and that he possessed the same infallibility. This truth had been predicted of him by the prophets: *the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek*, Is. lxi. 1. It was taught by Jesus Christ himself: *my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me*, John vii. 16. *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, John viii. 12. It is the foundation of the faith which we have, in truths which flowed from his lips.

But however perfect this unity may have been, it was nevertheless susceptible of degrees. Jesus Christ, considered as Mediator, never could be in an error, but he did not always know the whole truth. He had not in the cradle the same extent of knowledge which he possessed at the age of *twelve years*, Luke ii. 42. when, in the temple, he, by his

profound knowledge, excited astonishment in the most learned of the doctors. Most probably, likewise, he did not yet possess at the age of twelve years, the illumination which he attained unto in the sequel of his ministry. The evangelist expressly remarks, that *he grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom*, Luke ii. 40. Never did he attain, during his abode on earth, that height of intelligence which he had after his ascension into heaven. It is expressly said, that as *the Son of Man*, he *knew not the day* of judgment. The soul, to which his mortal body was united, acquired, undoubtedly, after that body left the tomb, an extension of knowledge which it had not so long as the body to which it was united was yet in a mortal condition. This is the first glory that Jesus Christ asks of his Father. He prays that he would grant him to partake, in a manner more intimate, in his counsels, and to draw, from the unbounded ocean of light, more abundant supplies of divine wisdom and knowledge. *Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee*, ver. 1.

(2) The second unity, subsisting between Jesus Christ Mediator, and the Father, is a unity of will. Observe to what an extent it has been carried. The incarnation was an effect of the entire submission of this divine Saviour to the will of his Father: *when he cometh into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God*, Heb. x. 5—7. When Joseph and Mary found fault with him for having parted company with them, he re-

plied: *how is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* Luke ii. 49. When his disciples presented him with food, *saying, Master eat: he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of: . . . . my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*, John iv. 31, &c. and, in the text, he said, that for the *sake* of his disciples, whom the Father had given him, he *sanctified himself.*

It is, however, demonstrably certain that in proportion as the human soul acquires more light and knowledge, according as it is less distracted by the sinless infirmities of nature, it takes the loftier flight toward the love of order, and conceives a more powerful attachment to the sovereign will of heaven. There were certain moments in the life of Jesus Christ, during his abode on earth, in which he was entirely absorbed of those objects which incessantly engage the attention of the angels of God. He was led of the spirit into the wilderness; there *he fasted forty days and forty nights*, Matt. iv. 2. and these days and nights were undoubtedly passed in contemplation, in rapture, in an extacy of zeal and fervor. But after these forty days and forty nights were over, *he was afterwards an hungred.*

In like manner, he beheld the glory of God on the holy mountain, and the transfiguration which he underwent, kindled to a higher and a higher degree, the desire which he felt to discharge, in a manner worthy of his exalted character, the commission which he had received of the Father. But those rays of glory were to be eclipsed, and from that sacred place he must descend. During the whole course of his life he kept constantly in view the end of his mission. He expressed many an ar-

dent wish to accomplish the sacrifice, which he came into the world to offer up.

But at the idea of death, he is for a season in heaviness: there is an appearance of desiring, as it were, to compound matters with the Deity; and this, some interpreters consider as the sense of these words: *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, that I may not drink it,* Matt. xxvi. 39. and, perhaps, it is likewise the sense of those which follow: *now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour,* John xii. 27. Not that Jesus Christ ever thought he could be saved from that hour, or delivered from drinking that cup which was going to be put into his hand; but it was the language of innocent human infirmity, excited by the first ideas of extreme approaching agony. It is only in the possession of perfect blessedness, that our virtues shall acquire all the activity, all the extent, of which they are susceptible. And it is, yes, it is in this activity, it is in this extent of virtue, which had the power of still farther strengthening the band which united Jesus Christ to his Father. For this reason it is, that he promises to the glory of God, that return and increase of glory which he asks of him: *Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,* ver. 1.

(3) In the third place, there subsists between the Father and the Son, a unity of dominion. Magnificent displays of this were visible even while our blessed Lord tabernacled among them. Is the expression too strong, if we say that God Almighty, when he sent Jesus Christ into the world made him the depository of his omnipotence. The winds, the waves, men, devils, life, death, the elements,

universal nature, all, all submitted to his sovereign will.

But, if the power of Jesus Christ was unbounded as considered in itself, it was limited, however, in its exercise. It was no easy matter to discover the depository of the divine omnipotence in the person of that Man, consigned over to the hands of executioners, dragged before a tribunal of iniquity, and nailed to a cross. There is a dominion, with which it imples a contradiction, to suppose Jesus Christ invested, before he suffered death, for this dominion was to be expressly the reward of suffering: *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,* Phil. ii. 8, 11. and in the second psalm, ver. 8, 9. *ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

This is the dominion of which he took possession. On the third day after his death, angels alight upon his tomb, not to effect his resurrection from the dead, but to admire the wonders of it; to render their profoundest homage to that divine Man, the only dead person who had ever revived by his own power; and to yield obedience to that mandate of the great Supreme: *let all the angels of God worship him,* Heb. i. 6. Forty days after his resurrection, he makes a cloud to serve him as a triumphal chariot, on which he is borne aloft, and

disappears from the eyes of his beloved disciples. As he ascends through the regions of the air, to occupy a throne above the skies, the church triumphant, and all the spirits in bliss, unite in celebrating his return to heaven, with songs of praise; the celestial arches resound with their joyful acclamations, while they cry aloud: *lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in*, Ps. xxiv. 7.

On his arrival at the habitation of his glory, he assumes his place at the Father's right hand. And thence it is that he exercises the dominion to which his sufferings and death have exalted him: thence it is he beholds the impotent designs of the enemies of the church, and, to use the expression of scripture, *laughs at them*, Ps. ii. 4. Thence it is he brings down to the ground the heads of the haughtiest potentates: thence it is he controls the power of tyrants, or permits it to act, and to accomplish his purpose: thence it is he bends his eyes upon us, my brethren; that he hears, and regards, and answers the prayers which, in our indigence, we present at the throne of grace: thence it is he beholds St. Stephen, and grants the petition of that martyr, from amidst the shower of stones which is overwhelming him: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Thence it is he draws to himself the souls of our expiring believers, and says to all those who combat under the banners of the cross: *to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne*, Rev. iii. 21. *be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10.

Such is the glory which must follow the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world. Such must be the perfection of that unity, which subsists between Jesus Christ Mediator and his Father: *Fa-*

ther, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee . . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world . . . . Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the Son of Perdition . . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

SERMON III.

PART II.

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL PRAYER.

JOHN xvii. 18—21.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

WE have seen the relation which subsists between Jesus Christ and his heavenly Father. 1. A relation of nature, implied in that *glory* which he *had with the Father before the world was.* 2. There is a relation of economy: Jesus Christ as Mediator, is *one with God.* And this relation consists of three particulars: (1) Unity of idea: (2) Unity of will: (3) Unity of dominion. Let us,

II. Consider the relation subsisting between Jesus Christ and his apostles, not in their character,

simply, of believers of Christ, but principally in the view of their public character as apostles. Let us inquire, in what sense it is that Jesus Christ makes it his request, that they may be *one* with the Father and himself, as he was *one* with the Father. This is the second object, this the second mystery, to which we now call upon you to direct your serious attention.

Weigh the import of these remarkable words: *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world: and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* Jesus Christ had entered into the plan of the eternal Father, respecting the salvation of the human race; and had come into the world to put it in execution. It was necessary, in like manner, that the apostles should enter into the plan of this divine Saviour, and, to the utmost extent of their ability, should labor, together with him, in executing the merciful design. And as Jesus Christ, in order to acquit himself, with success, of this mystery which was committed unto him, must have possessed, with the Father, a unity of idea, of will, and of dominion, it was likewise necessary that the apostles should possess this threefold unity with Jesus Christ; and this precisely is the substance of what Jesus Christ prays for in their behalf.

1. In order to acquit themselves successfully of the functions of their ministry, it was necessary that the apostles should participate in the ideas of Jesus Christ, and in the infallibility of his doctrine. He had himself said to them, *he that heareth you, heareth me*, Luke x. 16. He had given them this commission: *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: and, lo, I am with you*

always, even to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

How could they possibly have executed this commission, to any advantage, unless they had participated in the ideas of Jesus Christ, and in the infallibility of his decisions? What dependance could we repose on their testimony had it been liable to error? How should we implicitly admit the oracles which emanated from the apostolic college, if they were to be subjected to examination at the tribunal of human reason, as those of mere human teachers? The slightest alteration affecting the assertion of the infallibility of the doctrine of those holy men, subverts it from the very foundation. The moment that human reason assumes a right to appeal from their decisions, it is all over, and we are at once brought back to the religion of nature. And the moment we are brought back to the religion of nature, we are bewildered in all the uncertainty of the human understanding: we are still *seeking the Lord, if haply we might feel after him, and find him,* Acts xvii. 27. as did the Pagan world. We are still saying, as did the greatest philosophers of the Gentile nations, respecting inquiries of the highest importance to mankind: *Who can tell? Peradventure.* We are treating St. Peter and St. Paul, as we do Socrates and Seneca.

Now, if such be our condition, what advantage has the Christian over the Pagan? Wherein consists the superiority of the gospel over the systems of mere human philosophy? Away with a suspicion so injurious to the great Author and Finisher of our faith. He has supplied his church with every thing necessary to a clear knowledge, and a well grounded belief of all needful truth. When he committed to the hands of his disciples, the ministry of his

gospel, he obtained for them, in substance, the illumination which he himself possessed, for the successful exercise of it.

2. But is it sufficient to possess superior illumination, in order to the honorable and useful exercise of the Christian ministry? Is it sufficient to *speak with the tongues of men and of angels?* Is it sufficient to be endowed with *the gift of prophecy; to understand all mysteries; to have all knowledge*, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Ah! how fruitless are the most pathetic sermons, if the preacher himself pretends to exemption from the obligations which he would impose upon other men! Ah! how the most dazzling and sublime eloquence languishes, when tarnished by the vices of the orator! This position, my brethren, admits not of a doubt; and let the reflection, however humiliating, be ever present to our thoughts; one of the most insurmountable obstacles to the efficacy of preaching, is the irregular life of preachers.

If this reflection, at all times, rests on a solid foundation, it was particularly the case with regard to those ministers whom God set apart to the office of laying the very first foundations of his church, and to be themselves *the pillar and ground of the truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. With what dreadful suspicions must not our minds have been perplexed, had we seen in the persons whom Jesus Christ himself immediately chose to be his successors, the abominations which are visible in many of those who, at this day, pretend to fill his place in the church? What dreadful suspicions would agitate our minds, had St. Peter lived in the manner of some of those who have called themselves the successors of St. Peter? If out of the same mouth, from which issued those gracious maxims which the Holy Spirit has preserved for our instruction, there

had proceeded, at the same time, those iniquitous sentences, those sanguinary decrees, those insolent decisions, which have fulminated from the mouths of certain pontiffs bearing the Christian name? If these same apostles, who preached nothing but superiority to the world: nothing but humility, but charity, but patience, but chastity, had been, like some of their pretended successors, addicted to the spirit and practice of revenge, of ambition, of simony; magicians, fornicators; men polluted with abominations, which the majesty of this place, and the sanctity of the pulpit, hardly permit me to insinuate? What must not have been the infamy of committing such things, when the bare idea of them puts modesty to the blush?

O how much better has Jesus Christ, our great leader and commander, provided whatever was necessary for the good of his church! During the whole course of his life, he presented a model of the most pure and consummate virtue. One of the great ends of his devotedness to death, was to engage his beloved disciples thence to derive motives to the practice of holiness. This is the sense which may be assigned to that expression in the prayer, which he here addresses to his Father: *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified,* ver. 19. *For then I sanctify myself:* The meaning may be: "I labor incessantly to excite thy love within me to a brighter and a brighter flame, not only because it is a disposition of soul the most becoming and intelligent creature, but that I may serve as a model to them who are to diffuse the knowledge of my gospel over the world."

Or, according to the interpretation of others: *for them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified:* that is, I devote myself to death for my disciples, to the end that, beholding in my sacrifice

the horrors of sin, which I am about to expiate, and the overflowings of my affection for those in whose place I am substituting myself, they may be engaged to exhibit an inviolable attachment to thy holy laws." Which ever of these two senses we affix to the words of our blessed Lord, they strongly mark that intense application of thought by which he was animated, to inspire his disciples with the love of virtue.

This is not all: he is expressing an earnest wish, that assistance from heaven might supply what his absence was going to deprive them of: *For them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified.* But now I leave the world. My disciples are going to lose the benefit of my instructions and of my example. May a celestial energy, may divine communications of resolution and strength occupy my place: *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil . . . . Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world: and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

3. Finally, Jesus Christ asks, in behalf of his disciples, a participation in the dominion of which he himself had taken possession. He had already in part, conveyed to them that dominion: *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one,* ver. 22. What is that *glory, which the Father had given to Jesus Christ,* and which Jesus Christ *had given* to his apostles? Among a variety of ideas which may be formed of it, me must, in a particular manner, understand it as implying the gift of miracles. In virtue of this power, those sacred ministers were

enabled to carry conviction to the human mind, with an energy of eloquence altogether divine. The resurrection of one who had been dead is the great exordium of their sermons. This argument they oppose to all the sophisms of vain philosophy: *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses: therefore being by the right hand of God exalted . . . . he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear:* Acts ii. 32, 33. They confound those who continue proof against conviction. They call down the most formidable strokes of celestial indignation on some of those who had dared to trifle with the oath of fidelity plighted to their divine Master. Ananias and Saphira fall dead at their feet. Acts v. 9. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience,* 2 Cor. x. 4—6.

But this is not the whole of that authority, and the whole of that power which Jesus Christ wishes to be conferred on his disciples. He asks, in their behalf, that when they had, like him, finished the work which they had given them to do, they should be exalted to the same glory: that after having *turned many to righteousness,* they might *shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever:* Dan. xii. 3. This is what he had promised them: *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* This is what he asks for them: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be*

with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world . . . . that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us, ver. 24. 21.

We conclude this head with a reflection of no small importance: namely this, That among the graces which Jesus Christ prays for in behalf of his apostles, must be comprehended those which were necessary to the persons who were after them to exercise the gospel ministry. Whatever difference there may be between these two orders of ministers, they are the objects of the same prayer. Their talents were to differ only in degree, and God, at this day, limits the measure of them, only because circumstances have varied, and miracles are no longer necessary to the church. But as the apostles had, in substance, the same gifts with Jesus Christ, the ministers of the gospel likewise partake in the gift of the apostles, because they have received the same commission, and are called to build up the church, of which those holy men laid the foundations.

Lofty idea of the apostleship! lofty idea of the office of the gospel-ministry! The apostles entered with Jesus Christ into the plan of the redemption of mankind, as Jesus Christ entered into it with God. And the ministers of the gospel, to this day, enter into the same plan with the apostles, as the apostles entered into it with Jesus Christ. The eternal Father, *before the foundation of the world,* Matt. xxv. 34. foreseeing the deplorable misery in which the wretched pregony of Adam were to involve themselves, traced the plan of redemption: from that period he provided the victim: from the period he set apart for us a Redeemer: from that pe-

riod he prepared for us a kingdom. Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, came and executed this plan. He assumed our flesh. He lived among us. He suffered. He died. *I have glorified thee upon the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,* ver. 4.

The apostles succeeded their Master. And these holy men, with that heroic courage which the idea of a commission so honorable inspires into generous minds, braved and surmounted all the difficulties which opposed their progress. *They trod upon the lion and adder : the young lion and dragon they trampled under feet,* Ps. xci. 13. *Power* was given them *to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy,* Luke x. 19, They took as a model in their course, (it is an idea of the Psalmist) that glorious orb of day, whose *going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it,* Ps. xix. 6 *Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world* Rom. x. 18. They rose superior to the powers of sense and nature: they subdued the passions which have naturally the greatest influence over the heart of man: they *knew no man after the flesh,* 2 Cor. v. 16. They carried on their souls the impress of their Saviour's virtues, as they bare his marks imprinted on their bodies.

The ministers of Jesus Christ assume the place of the apostles: they have one and the same vocation: they are called to the same work: they have to teach the same truths; the same vices to reprove; the same maxims to establish; the same threatenings to denounce; the same consolations to administer; the same felicy and the same glory to promise. *Who is sufficient for these things ?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. But we are upheld by you, all-powerful intercession of Jesus Christ with his Father! From

your energy it is that we obtain, in our retirements, that attention, that composure, that concentration of thought of which we stand in need, in order to penetrate into those lively oracles which it is our duty to announce to this people. From your powerful energy it is we obtain that clearness, that fervor, that courage, that elevation of spirit of which we stand in need in this chair of verity, to exalt us above the malignant censure of a murmuring multitude, ever disposed to find fault with those who preach the truth. To you we must stand for ever indebted for the success of our ministry, and for the hope we entertain that this people, to whom we minister in holy things, shall one day be *our joy and our crown*, 1 Thess. ii. 19.

III. Thus are we led forward, my brethren, to the third division of our discourse, in which you are most particularly interested. It is truely delightful to behold *the Author and Finisher of our faith* united, in a manner so intimate, with diety. It is delightful to behold those apostles, whose writings are in our hands, and whose doctrine is the rule of our faith, intimately united to Jesus Christ as he is with God. There is, however, something behind still more particular and more consolatory. All these different relations, of Jesus Christ with God, of the apostles with Jesus Christ have been formed only in the view of producing others, and these affect you. Attend to the interest which you have in the prayer of Jesus Christ: *neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us*, ver. 20, 21.

Awake to a sense of the dignity of your high calling. Contemplate the unbounded extent of

your privileges. Behold to what a height of glory you are encouraged to aspire, and what unspeakable benefits you already derive from the religion of the blessed Jesus! Already you possess with God, as doth Jesus Christ, a unity of ideas, and you partake, in some sense, of his infallibility, by subjecting your faith to his divine oracles, and by seeing, if I may use the expression, by seeing with his eyes. Already you have with God, as Jesus Christ hath, a unity of will, by the reception of his laws, and by exerting all your powers that his will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Already you enjoy with God, as doth Jesus Christ, a unity of dominion. "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death," 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. "You are already partakers of a divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. "You are already transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

But how is this union still marred and interrupted! How imperfect still this *participation of the divine nature*, and this *transformation into the same image!* Let this be to us, my brethren, a source of humiliation, but not of dejection. A more glorious state of things is to succeed the present: *it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. A new influx of light with which the soul shall be replenished; a new influx of divine love, with which the heart shall be inflamed; a new influx of felicity and delight, with which the immortal nature shall be inundated, are going, ere long, to place in its brighest point of view, all the sublimity, all the excellency of our condition: *Father, I pray not for my disciples alone, but for*

them also who shall believe in me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.

But how is it possible for the miserable posterity of Adam; how is it possible for wretched creatures born in sin; how is it possible for frail mortals, a compound of dust and ashes, *that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth,* Job. iv. 19. how is it possible for beings so mean, so degraded, to become *one* with God, as Jesus Christ is *one* with him?

Away, Christians, away with every shade of incredulity. Nothing is too great for this prayer to procure. There is nothing that God can deny to this dying Intercessor. Let the mind be filled to its utmost capacity, with all that is vast and affecting in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ was about to present to his Father. Consider that *God is love,* 1 John iv. 16. And what could the God who is *love* refuse to the Redeemer of the world, at the moment when he was going to devote himself, with such ardor of affection, for the salvation of mankind. Behold him, the Redeemer of a lost world, behold him ready to affix the seal to the great work which God had committed to him: behold him prepared to be *led, as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep, dumb before her shearers,* Isa. liii. 7. behold him prepared to undergo that punishment, the bare idea of which makes nature shudder: behold him prepared to enter into *the deep mire where there is no standing,* of which the prophets speak, Psa. lxix. 2. and all this out of that love, and all this from that principle of charity which glowed in his compassionate breast.

At that moment of love, at that moment which

embraces all eternity—pardon me the expression, my friends, and condemn me not, if in a subject which has nothing human, I am constrained to employ modes of speech which are not in common use among men—at that moment which embraces a whole eternity, when charity was carried as far as it could go, this Redeemer presents himfelf before the God of love, and asks of him, that in virtue of this sacrifice of love, which he was going to offer up, all the faithful, this people, you, my dearly beloved brethren,you might be crowned with the felicity and with the glory, with which he himself was going to be crowned; but to which love would have rendered him insensible, had he not promised himself to communicate them, one day, to men, the objects of his tenderest affection.

O mysteries of redemption, how far you transcend all expression, all thought! Ye angels of light, who live in the bosom of glory, turn aside your eyes from beholding wonders which dazzle the heaven of heavens: bend lowly over the mystical ark, and search it to the bottom. And you, for whom all these wonders are wrought, children of fallen Adam, bow down in gratitude and adoration, and measure, if you can, the dimensions, *the length, the breath, the height, the depth,* of that abyss, *which passeth knowledge,* Eph. iii. 18, 19.

My brethren, there is an air of credulity and superstition in what passes between a dying person, and a minister who is endeavoring to fortify him against the fears of death. The minister has the appearance of an impostor, and the dying person of a visionary. We promise to a man extended on a sick bed, to a man who is in a few days to be shut up in a tomb, and to become a prey to worms, we promise him an eternal abode, and rivers of pleasures: we assure him that he is the favorite of

heaven, at the very moment when he is going to become the abhorrence of the earth, at the very moment when corruption and rottenness are hastening to put to flight from his person his most affectionate friends. These pretensions are, however, incontestable. They are founded on the charitable prayers which the Redeemer of men addressed to the God of love, at the time when he himself was perfected in love: "*I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;* and I am going to seal with my blood that awful ministry which thou hast committed unto me. Grant to my obedience, grant to the prayers and to the blood of thy expiring Son, that which is most capable of supporting him amidst those fearful objects with which he is surrounded: it is the salvation of that world of believers, who are to embrace my doctrine: *Father, I will that where I am, those whom thou hast given me, may be there also with me, that they may behold my glory: and I pray not for them only, but also for those who shall believe in thee through their word.*"

These prayers, my brethren, are still presented. Jesus Christ is still doing in heaven, what, in the days of his flesh, he did upon earth: he is *even at the right hand of God*, where he still *maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 34. He is still *able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. But do we avail ourselves of these prayers? But are we seconding this intercession? Alas! I was preparing to set open to you all the treasures of consolation which we see issuing from a dying Saviour's prayers. But I find in that prayer, one word which stops me short; one word which terrifies me; one word which sug-

gests an inquiry that awakens a thousand solicitudes: Are we in the class of those for whom Jesus Christ prayed to the Father; or are we of those for whom, he tells us, he prayed not? Does it contain the sentence of our absolution, or that of our eternal condemnation? You have heard this word: but have you seriously weighed its import? Have you listened to it with that composure, and with that application, which it demands? The word is this: *I pray not for the world: I pray for those whom thou hast given me*, ver. 9. My disciples, for whom I pray to thee, *are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*, ver. 14.

We frame for ourselves a morality that suits our own fancy. We look upon a worldly spirit as a matter of trivial importance, which it is scarcely worth while to think of correcting. A preacher who should take upon him to condemn this disposition of mind, would pass for a mere declaimer, who abused the liberty given him, of talking alone from the pulpit. A wordly life, wasted in dissipation, in pleasure, at play, at public spectacles, has nothing terrifying in our eyes. But be pleased to learn from Jesus Christ, whether or not a worldly spirit be a trivial matter. But learn of Jesus Christ, what are the fatal effects of a worldly mind. It is an exclusion from the glorious catalogue of those for whom Jesus Christ intercedes. It destroys the right of pretending to those blessings which the Saviour requests in behalf of his church: *I pray not for the world: I pray for them whom thou hast given me.* My disciples, for whom I pray to thee, *are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Would you wish to know whether Jesus Christ is an intercessor for you? Would you wish to know whether you are of the number of them who shall,

one day, be where Jesus Christ is? See whether you can distinguish yourself by this character, *they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* And what is it not to be of the world?

Not to be of the world, is not to live in deserts and solitudes: it is not for a man to bury himself before he is dead, and to pass his life as it were in a tomb. Jesus Christ and his apostles lived in society; but they sanctified society by useful instruction and by a holy example; but they were the light of the world, and if they mingled *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,* they were *blameless and harmless, and without rebuke;* and shone among them.

Not to be of the world, is not to abandon the reins of government to ruffians. Jesus Christ and his apostles permitted Christians to occupy the most distinguished stations in society; but it was their wish and endeavor, that while they filled such stations, they should guard against the illusion of their own lustre; that they should not imagine themselves exalted to terrestrial greatness, merely to display their own vain self-importance; but that they should ever keep in view the necessities of those whose happiness is entrusted to their care.

Not to be of the world, is not to break off all relation with the world, to be always absorbed in meditation, in contemplation, in extasies. No, religion is adapted to the various relations of human life; to fathers, to children, to masters, to servants.

But not to be of the world, is never to lose sight, even in the distraction of worldly concerns, of the end which God proposed to himself, when he placed us in the world: it is constantly to recollect that we have a soul to be saved; an account to render; a hell to shun; a heaven to gain; it is

habitually to direct, toward these great objects, the edge of our spirit, the vivacity of our passions, the ardor of our desires: it is to be able to say, at the close of life, with Jesus Christ, as far as the infinite distance between the sanctity of this divine Saviour and ours can permit: *Father, I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have fought the good fight. I have kept the faith*, 2 Tim. iv. 7. Woe be to the man who, at that fatal period, shall be reduced to the necessity of holding an opposite language, and of saying, "Scarcely have I, as yet, put my hand to the work which thou gavest me to do. Scarcely have I employed an instant of my time in meditating on eternity." Woe be to the man who shall then have cause to say: and ah! how many such are there, under the name of Christians! I "have employed part of my life in cultivating my estate, in swelling my revenue, in *pulling down my barns and building greater*, Luke xii. 18. I have devoted another to the delights of a present life, to refinement in pleasure. A third has been employed in gratifying the most criminal appetites, in vomitting out blasphemy against my benefactor; in waging war with religion, morals, and common decency, in scandalizing the church of God, by my impurities and excess."

Let us not be ingenious in practising illusion upon ourselves. Let us not amuse ourselves with unprofitable speculations respecting the meaning of these words: *I pray not for the world.* What bold and rash researches have the schools pursued on the subject of this saying of Christ? What chimerical consequences have not been deduced from it? But from these I must still revert to this grand principle: Are you of the world, or are you not of the world? *Say not in thine heart, Who shall*

ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, Rom. x. 6—8. *The friendship of the world is enmity with God*, James iv. 4. If you are of the world, you are not of the number of those for whom Jesus Christ pleads. If you are not of the world, you are within the decree of his election: he has interceded for you, and you are warranted to expect all the fruits of his intercession.

These reflections will probably excite, in some, many a painful apprehension, amounting to a conviction that you are in the dreadful class of those for whom Christ intercedes not. But if it be high time to renounce this world, by acts of penitence, of mortification, of a sincere return unto God, let us proportion these acts to the degree of criminality which renders them necessary. The love of the world has inspired a taste for voluptuousness: let us deny ourselves, by a course of abstinence, during the passion weeks, even from what is necessary to nature.* The love of the world has transported us into excesses of worldly joy. Let us clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes during the passion weeks, or rather let us present unto God the *sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart*, Psa. li. 19. Let us make extraordinary efforts to disarm his wrath, ever enkindled against the abominations of the Christian world. Let us say to him a thousand and a thousand times, as we turn our eyes toward the cross of Jesus Christ: *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces*, Dan. ix. 7. Let us entreat him by those bowels of love which prompt-

* Does not this passage savor somewhat too strongly of popery?

ed him to restore a fallen world, that he would disunite us from the creature, and unite us to himself.

If we act in this manner, we have every thing to expect from a God, whose great leading character is love. He will take pity on this wretched people. He will have compassion on these miserable provinces, in which it seems as if every individual had undertaken the task of shutting his own eyes, in order to precipitate himself, with the greater indifference, into the abyss which is gaping to swallow us up: he will repress those sea piracies, which have reduced so many families, and impaired the general commerce: he will remove those dreadful plagues which have ruined so many respectable communities as well as individuals: he will stop those fearful inundations which have already committed such devastation in the midst of us; and which still occasion so many well grounded alarms: he will reconcile the hearts of the potentates of Europe, and engage them to use their united efforts to promote the happiness and the glory of the Christian world.

Much more, if we are not of the world, we shall partake of delights which the world knows not of, and which it cannot take from us, as it cannot bestow. If we are not of the world, we shall have cause of self-congratulation, with our divine Master, that we are not like desperate madmen, who seem resolutely bent on mutual and self-destruction; and in these sentiments shall thus address ourselves to God: *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee,* ver. 25. If we are not of the world, we shall be animated with a holy intrepidity, when death takes us out of the world, nay, when the

world and its foundations crumble into dust beneath our feet.

We shall be filled with joy unspeakable, when we reflect, that we are leaving a world of which we were not, to go to that of which we are *citizens*. We shall say, amidst the tears and lamentations of a last adieu: "It is true, my dear children, it is true, my dear friends, I leave you upon the earth: but my Jesus is in heaven, and I go to be where he is: *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better,* Phil. i. 23. It is true, I tear myself from you, and it is like tearing me from myself; but this mournful is not an everlasting separation. Jesus Christ has prayed equally for you and for me. He has asked for me and for you, that we should all be *where he is,* that *we may all be one in him and with the Father:* and I only go before you a few instants into this state of blessedness."

Ah! God grant, that after having preached the gospel to you, we may be enabled to say, with Jesus Christ, at our dying hour: *Father, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost!* ver. 12. God grant there may be no *son of perdition* in this assembly! May God vouchsafe to hearken to the prayer which we present in your behalf, in this place, and which we shall present to him on a dying bed: or rather, may God vouchsafe to hear the prayer which Jesus Christ presents for us: *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!* Amen. To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

MATT. xxvii. 45—53.

Now, from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land, unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straight-way one of them ran, and took a spunge, and fillea it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints, which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

WE are going to set before you, this day, my Christian friends, the concluding scene of the most dreadful spectacle that ever the sun beheld. On beholding the order, the preparations, and the approaching completion of the sacrifice of Isaac, the soul is thrown into astonishment. A father binding his own son with cords, extending him upon a funeral-pile, raising up an armed right

hand to pierce his bosom; and all this by the command of heaven! What a prodigy! At such a sight reason murmurs, faith is staggered, and Providence seems to labor under an indelible imputation. But a seasonable and happy interposition dissipates all this darkness. An angel descends from heaven, a voice pierces the yielding air: *Abraham, Abraham; lay not thy hand upon the lad; for now I know that thou fearest God; seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me,* Gen. xxii. 12. And this revolution silences the murmurings of reason, re-establishes our faith, and vindicates the ways of Providence.

A greater than Isaac, my brethren, a greater than Abraham, is here. This sacrifice must be completed; this victim must die; this burnt-offering must be reduced to ashes. In the preceding chapters you have seen the command given, the scaffold erected, the arm extended, to smite the devoted Jesus. You are going to behold him expire; no victim substituted in his room; no revocation of the decree; and instead of inquiring like Isaac: *behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* ver. 7. he saith, *Lo, I come; . . . . to do thy will, O my God,* Psa. xl. 7, 8. Jesus expires: the dead leave their tombs: the sun withdraws his light: nature is convulsed at sight of her Creator dying upon a cross: and the Son of God's love, before he utters his last sigh, gives a free course to his complaints, and makes an astonished world re-echo those mournful sounds: *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* ver. 46.

And you, Christians, what are you to become at beholding this spectacle; and what effects are these objects to produce, that shall be in any proportion to their magnitude? With whatever suc-

cess our happiest addresses to you may be crowned, your actions must ever fall short of your obligations and engagements. It is possible, however, that on certain points, we may have commendation only to bestow. When restitution is the theme, some one, perhaps, conscience-struck, some Zaccheus, is induced to restore fourfold. When the doctrine of reconciliation and forgiveness is preached, some one, smitten to the heart, is, it may be, disposed to open his arms to an estranged brother. But what fruit can this discourse produce, capable of, I do not say, fulfilling your obligations, but that shall bear any manner of proportion to them? Were your hearts, henceforward, to burn with the purest and most ardent affection: were your eyes to become a living fountain of tears: were every particle of your frame to serve as a several victim to penitence: were this vaulted roof to cleave assunder: were the dead, deposited in these tombs, to start up into life: What would there be in all this that is not absorbed of the objects which we are going to display?

Come, and clothe yourselves in mourning, with the rest of nature. Come, with the Centurion, and recognize your Redeemer and your God, and let the sentiments which severally occupy all these hearts and minds, unite in this one: *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,* Gal. ii. 20. Amen.

That you may derive from the words which we have read, the fruit which the Holy Spirit presents to us in them, we shall, 1. attempt some elucidation of the letter of the text: and then, 2. endea-

deavor to penetrate into the spirit of it, and dive to the bottom of the mysteries which it contains.

I. We begin with attempting some elucidation of the letter of the text. And,

1. Our first remark turns on the *time* which the evangelist assigns to the first events which he is here relating: *from the sixth hour*, says he, *there was darkness unto the ninth hour: and about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice*, and so on. Respecting which it is to be observed, that the Jews computed the hours of the day from sun-rising. The first from sun-rising was called *one hour;* the second *two*, and so of the rest: *from the sixth hour to the ninth hour;* in other words, from noon till three of the clock afternoon.

But what merits a more particular attention, is this: that the evangelists appear here to vary in their testimony: at least St. Mark tells us, chap. xv. 25. that part of the events which the other evangelists say took place about the *ninth* hour, happened at the *third* hour. A single remark will resolve this difficulty. The Jews employed another method in computing time, besides that which we have indicated. They divided the day into four intervals. The first comprehended the space from the first to the third hour of the day inclusively: the second, from the end of the third hour of the day to the sixth: and so of the rest. This mode of computation, if certain doctors are to be credited, took its rise from the custom which was observed in the temple, of presenting prayers and sacrifices at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour. Now the Jews sometimes denominated the whole of this first interval, which contained three hours of the day, *one hour*, or the *first hour*. The second interval they denominated *two*, or the *second hour*,

which contained the second three hours, and so of the rest. This remark solves the apparent difficulty which we pointed out. Some of the evangelists have followed the first mode of computation, and others have adopted the second. The *ninth hour*, in the style of St. Matthew, and the *third hour*, in the style of St. Mark, denote one and the same season of the day; because the one computes the hours elapsed from sun-rising, and the other that third interval of three hours, which commenced precisely at the ninth hour.

2. Our second remark, will lead us into an examination of certain questions started, relative to the prodigies recorded by our evangelist. It is said,

(1) That *there was darkness over all the land.* It appears from astronomical calculation, and from the very nature of solar eclipses, which are occasioned by the interposition of the body of the moon between us and the orb of day, which can take place only at the change, whereas it was then at the full, being the fourteenth day of the month of March; it appears, I say, from these considerations, that this darkness was not an eclipse properly so called, but an obscuration effected by a special interference of Providence, which we are unable clearly to explain.

If we are incapable of assigning the cause, we are equally incapable of determining the extent of this wonderful appearance. The expression in the original, *there was darkness over all the land*, or, according to St. Luke's phraseology, *over all the earth*, ch. xxiii. 44. which presents at first to the mind an idea of the whole globe, frequently restricted in scripture, sometimes to the land of Judea, sometimes to the whole Roman empire; and this ambiguity, joined to the silence of the sacred

historians, renders it impossible for us to decide, whether the darkness overspread the land of Judea only, or involved all the rest of our hemisphere.

Neither do we deem it of importance to dwell on an examination of the monuments supposed to be found in antiquity respecting the truth of the prodigy of which we have been speaking. Among those which are transmitted to us on this subject, there is one which bears visible marks of forgery. I speak of the testimony of Dionysius, falsely denominated the Areopagite, who affirms that he himself saw, in Egypt, the darkness mentioned by the evangelists, which drew from him this exclamation: *Assuredly, either the God of Nature is suffering, or the frame of the universe is going to be destroyed.* The learned have so clearly demonstrated that the author of this book is an impostor, who, though he did not live till the fourth century, would nevertheless pass for the Dionysius who was converted to Christianity by the preaching of St. Paul on *Mars-hill*, Acts xvii. 34. that this author, transfixed with a thousand wounds, is fallen, never to rise again.

Much more dependance is, undoubtedly, to be placed on what is said by Phlegon, surnamed the Trallian, the emperor Adrian's freedman. He had composed a history of the Olympiads, some fragments only of which have reached us: but Eusebius, the historian, has preserved the following passage from it: *In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, there was an eclipse of the sun, much greater than any one which had ever before been observed. The night was so dark at noon-day, that the stars were perceptible; and there were such violent earthquakes in Bithynia, that the greatest part of the city of Nicea was swallowed up by it.* These are the words of Eu-

sebius: but the inquiries to which they might lead, could not be prosecuted in an exercise like the present, and they would encroach on that time which we destine to subjects of much higher importance.

(2) The evangelist tells us in the second place, *that the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.* There were two vails in the temple at Jerusalem: that which was suspended over the door that separated the holy place from the exterior of the temple, which Josephus calls a *Babylonian hanging*, embroidered curiously with gold, purple, scarlet, and fine flax. There was also a vail over the door which separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. The expression in the text, *the vail*, described in Exodus xxvi. 31. and denoted the vail by way of excellence, makes it presumable that the second is here meant.

(3) The evangelist relates, that *the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* This has induced interpreters to institute an inquiry, Who those dead persons were? It is pretended by some that they were the ancient prophets; others, with a greater air of probability, maintain that they were persons lately deceased, and well known to those to whom they appeared. But how is it possible to form a fixed opinion, when we are left so entirely in the dark?

(4) Our last remark relates to the interpretation affixed to the Syriac words which Jesus Christ pronounced: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani;* and which St. Mark gives in the Chaldaic form. The evangelist tells us, that some of those who heard Jesus Christ thus express himself, said, that *he called for Elias.* The persons who entertained this idea, could not be the Roman soldiers who assisted at the execution. By what means should they have

known any thing of Elias? They were not the Jews who inhabited Jerusalem and Judea: How could they have been acquainted with their native language? They must have been, on the one hand, Jews instructed in the traditions of their nation, and who, on the other, did not understand the language spoken at Jerusalem. Now this description applies exactly to those of the Jews who were denominated *Hellenists*, that is to say Greeks: they were of Jewish extraction, and had scattered themselves over the different regions of Greece.

But whence, it will be said, did they derive the strange idea, that Jesus Christ called for Elias? I answer, that it was not only from the resemblance in sound between the words Eli and Elias, but from another tradition of the Jews. It was founded on those words of the prophet Malachi: *behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet . . . . and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, ch. iv. 6. an oracle which presents no difficulty to the Christian, whom Jesus Christ has instructed to consider it as accomplished in the person of John Baptist. But the Jews understood it in the literal sense: they believed that Elias was still upon Mount Carmel, and was one day to re-appear. The coming of this prophet is still, next to the appearance of the Messiah, the object of their fondest hope. It is Elias, as they will have it, who *shall turn the heart of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto their fathers.* It is Elias who shall prepare the way of the Messiah, who shall be his forerunner, and who shall anoint him with the holy oil. It is Elias who shall answer all their enquiries, and resolve all their difficulties. It is Elias, who, by his prayers, shall obtain the resurrection of the just. It is Elias, who shall do for the Jews of

the dispersion what Moses did for the Israelites enslaved in Egypt: he shall march at their head, and conduct them into Canaan. These are all expressions of the Rabbins, whose names I suppress, as also the lists of the works from which we extract the passages just now quoted. Here we conclude our proposed commentary on the words, and now proceed,

II. To direct your attention to the great object exhibited in the text, Jesus Christ expiring on the cross. We shall derive from the words read, six ideas of the death of Jesus Christ. 1. The death of Christ is an expiatory sacrifice, in which the victim was charged with the sins of a whole world. 2. It is the body of all the shadows, the truth of all the types, the accomplishment of all the predictions of the ancient dispensation, respecting the Messiah.

3. It is, on the part of the Jewish nation, a crime, which the blackest colors are incapable of depicting, which has kindled the wrath of heaven, and armed universal nature against them. 4. It presents a system of morality in which every virtue is retraced, and every motive that can animate us to the practice of it is displayed. 5. It presents a mystery which reason cannot unfold, but whose truth and importance all the difficulties which reason may urge are unable to repair. 6. Finally, it is the triumph of the Redeemer over the tomb.

1. The death of Jesus Christ is an expiatory sacrifice, offered up to the divine justice. *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani: my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* This is the only proof which we shall at present produce in support of the doctrine of the atonement. It is, undoubtedly, difficult to determine, with precision, what were, at that

moment, the dispositions of the Saviour of the world. In general, we must carefully separate from them every idea of distrust, of murmuring, of despair. We must carefully separate every thing injurious to the immaculate purity from which Jesus Christ never deviated, and to that complete submission which he constantly expressed to the will of his heavenly Father. We here have a victim not dragged reluctantly to the altar, but voluntarily advancing to it; and the same love which carried him thither, supported him during the whole sacrifice. These complainings, therefore of Jesus Christ, afford us convincing reasons to conclude, that his death was of a nature altogether extraordinary.

Of this you will become perfectly sensible, if you attend to the two following reflections; (1) that no one ever appeared so deeply overwhelmed, at the thought of death, as Jesus Christ: (2) that no person ought to have met death with so much constancy as he, if he underwent a mere ordinary death.

(1) No one ever appeared so deeply overwhelmed, at the thought of death, as Jesus Christ. Recollect in what strong terms the sacred authors represent the awful conflict which he endured in the garden of Gethsemane. They tell us of his mortal sorrow: *my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, Matt. xxvi. 38. They speak of his agony; *being in an agony*, says St. Luke, xxii. 44. They speak of his fears: *he was heard in that he feared:* they speak of his cries and tears; *he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears*, Heb. v. 7. They speak of the prodigious effect which the fear of death produced upon his body; *his sweat was as it were drops of blood falling down to the ground.* They even

speak of the desire which he felt to draw back: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, Matt. xxvi. 39. And in our text, they represent him as reduced to the lowest ebb of resolution: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Is it possible to be more depressed at the thoughts of death?

(2) But we said, secondly, that no person ought to have met death with so much constancy as Jesus Christ, if he underwent a mere ordinary death. For,

(i) Jesus Christ died with perfect submission to the will of his heavenly Father, and with the most fervent love to the human race. Now, when a man serves a master whom he honors, when he suffers for the sake of persons whom he loved, he suffered with patience and composure.

(ii) Jesus Christ died with the most complete assurance of the justice of his cause, and of the innocence of his life. When, at the hour of death, conscience is roused as an armed man: when the recollection of a thousand crimes awakes; when a life of unrepented guilt stares the sinner in the face, the most obdurate heart is then stretched on the rack. But when, at a dying hour, the eye can look back to a life of innocence, what consolation does not the retrospect inspire? This was the case with Jesus Christ. Who ever carried so far charity, holy fervor, the practice of every virtue? Who ever was more blameless in conduct, more ardent in devotion, more pure in secret retirement?

(iii) Jesus Chirst died, thoroughly persuaded of the immortality of the soul. When a man has passed his life in atheism, and is dying in a state of uncertainty: haunted with the apprehension of falling into a state of annihilation: reduced to exclaim with Adam, *O my soul, whither art thou*

going ? Nature shudders ! Our attachment to existence inspires horror at the thought of existing no longer. But when we have a distinct knowledge of what man is ; when we are under a complete conviction that he consists of two substances, of spirit, and of matter; when we become thoroughly persuaded, that the destruction of the one does not imply the destruction of the other ; that if *the dust return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*, Eccl. xii. 7. when we know that the soul is the seat of all perception: that the body is merely a medium of intelligence ; that the soul, when disengaged from matter, may retain the same ideas, the same sentiments, as when united to the body ; that it may be capable of perceiving the sun, the stars, the firmament, death is no longer formidable. This, too, was the case with Jesus Christ. If ever any one enjoyed a persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and of the resurrection, it undoubtedly was this divine Saviour. He it was who had derived all the stores of knowledge from the bosom of the Father, who had *brought life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10.

(iv) Finally, Jesus Christ died in the perfect assurance of that felicity which he was going to take possession of. When the dying person beholds hell opening under his feet, and begins to feel the gnawings of *the worm which dieth not*, and the torment of *the fire that is never to be quenched*, Mark ix. 44. it is not astonishing that he should die in terror. But when he can say, as he looks death in the face, " There is the termination of all my woes, and the reward of all my labors: I am going to restore my soul into the hands of my Creator ; I behold heaven opened to receive it :" What transports of delight must not such a pros-

pect impart! Such, too, was the case with Jesus Christ. If ever any one could have enjoyed a foretaste of the paradise of God; if ever any one could conceive sublime ideas of that glory and blessedness, still it was Jesus Christ. He knew all these things by experience; he knew all the apartments of the kingdom of his Father: from God he had come, and to God he was returning. Nay, there must have been something peculiar in his triumph, transcendantly superior to that of the faithful in general. Because *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;* God was about *highly to exalt him, and to give him a name that is above every name,* Phil. ii. 8, 9. A cloud was going to serve him as a triumphal car, and the church triumphant was preparing to receive their King in these rapturous strains: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in,* Ps. xxiv. 7.

What, then, shall Jesus Christ do? Shall he meet death with joy? Shall he say with St. Paul, *I have a desire to depart?* Shall he exclaim with the female celebrated in ecclesiastical history, *This is the day that crowns are distributed, and I go to receive my share?* No, Jesus Christ trembles; he grows pale; his sweat becomes *as great drops of blood,* Luke xxii. 44. he cries out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Add to these reflections, the promises of divine assistance, which all the faithful have a right to claim, in the midst of tribulation, and which Jesus Christ must have had a far superior right to plead, had he died a mere ordinary death; but of the consolation flowing from these he seems entirely deprived.

Add, in a particular manner, the example of the

martyrs. They met death with unshaken fortitude: they braved the most cruel torments; their firmness struck their very executioners with astonishment. In Jesus Christ we behold nothing similar to this.

Nay, I will go farther, and say, that even the penitent thief discovers more firmness, in his dying moments, than the Saviour himself. He addresses himself to Jesus Christ, he implores his mercy, and, set at rest by the promises given to him, he expires in tranquillity. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, seems equally to despair of relief from heaven and from the earth.

The opposers of the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, will find it absolutely impossible to resolve these difficulties: the doctrine of the satisfaction is the only key that can unlock this mystery. *Innumerable evils have compassed me about,* is the prophetic language of the psalmist; *mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me,* Ps. xl. 12. *He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him:* as Isaiah expresses himself, ch. liii. 5 *God spared not his own Son,* Rom. viii. 32. *he hath made him to be sin for us,* 2 Cor. v. 21. *being made a curse for us,* Gal. iii. 13. to use the language of St. Paul: this is what we undertook to prove: and this is the first idea under which we proposed to represent the dying Saviour of the world.

SERMON IV.

PART II.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

MATT. xxvii. 45—53.

Now, from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land, unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straight-way one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints, which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

HAVING represented the death of Christ under the idea, 1. of an expiatory sacrifice, in which the victim was charged with the sins of the whole world: we proceed,

2. To consider it as the body of all the shadows,

the truth of all the types, the accomplishment of all the predictions of the ancient dispensation, respecting the Messiah. In fact, on what state or period of the Old Testament church can we throw our eyes, without discovering images of a dying Jesus, and traces of the sacrifice which he offered up?

If we resort to the origin of all our woes, there also we find the remedy. You will discover that Adam had no sooner by transgression fallen, than God promised him a *seed*, whose *heel the seed of the serpent should bruise*, but who, in that very act of suffering, should *bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. You will find this same promise repeated to Abraham; that seed announced anew to the patriarchs; and, taking St. Paul for your instructor, you will discover that this seed is Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 16.

If you contemplate the temporal wonders which God was pleased to work in favor of the Jewish nation, you will discover every where in them an adumbration of the spiritual blessings which the death of Jesus Christ was to procure for the church. You will there see the blood of a lamb on the doors of the Israelites. It was the shadow of that *Lamb without blemish and without spot, fore-ordained before the foundation of the world*, 1. Pet. i. 19, 20. You will there behold a rock, which, when smitten, emitted a stream sufficient to quench the thirst of a great people. This was a shadow of Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells us that it was Christ himself, who refreshes us with *living water, springing up into everlasting life*, 1 Cor. x. 4. and John iv. 14. You will there behold a serpent lifted up, the sight of which healed the deadly wounds of the Israelites. It was a shadow of him who was to be lifted up on the cross.

If you look into the Levitical worship, you will perceive through the whole of it, types of his death: a perpetual sacrifice: the type of him *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25. You will there behold victims, the types of him *who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, to purge the conscience from the dead works, to serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. a scape-goat, bearing *on his head all the iniquities of the children of Israel*, Lev. xvi. 21. The type of him who *suffered for us without the gate*, Heb. xiii. 13.

If you run over the predictions of the prophets, you will find them, as with one mouth, announcing the death of Jesus Christ. Now it is Isaiah who lifts up his voice, saying: *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows . . . . who made his soul an offering for sin . . . . who is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth . . . . who was oppressed, and was afflicted . . . . who was cut off out of the land of the living*, chap. liii. 3, &c. Now it is Daniel who holds up the same object: *Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself*, chap. ix. 26. Now Zacharias takes up the subject, and under the influence of prophetic inspiration, gives animation to the sword of *the Lord of Hosts: Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*, chap. xiii. 7. Now the prophetic David, minutely describing his sufferings, in such affecting terms as these: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not;*

and in the night season, and am not silent: . . . . I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people: all they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, and shake the head, Psa. xxii. 1, 2, 6, 7. and, in another place: *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the flood overflow me: I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God . . . . for thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face . . . . Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none: and for comforters, but I found none: they gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,* Psa. lxix. 1, 2, &c.

Such good reason have we to consider the death of Jesus Christ under this second idea: it is in our text. The Saviour appropriates to himself the prediction in the twenty-second psalm: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, he gives occasion to his executioners to present him with vinegar, which preceded his expiring exclamation, *It is finished,* as it is related by another of the evangelists.

3. The death of Jesus Christ is, on the part of the Jews, an atrocious crime, which has roused the indignation of heaven, and armed universal nature against them. But where shall we find colors black enough to depict it? Here the most ardent efforts of the imagination must fall far below the reality, and the most lively images come short of truth.

Supposing we possessed the faculty of collecting, into one point of view, all that was gentle in the

address of Jesus Christ, all that was fervent in his piety, humble in his deportment, pure in his conduct; supposing us capable of making an enumeration of all the benefits which he accumulated on the heads of those monsters of ingratitude; the gracious exhortations which he addressed to them; the miracles of goodness which he performed among them, in healing the sick, and raising the dead: supposing we could display to you those malignant calumnies with which they loaded him, those abominable and repeated falsehoods, those cruel and remorseless importunities for permission to put him to death, worthy of the severest execration had they been employed even against the most detestable of mankind: could we represent to you all that was barbarous and inhuman in the punishment of the cross: by telling you that it was a huge stake, crossed by another piece of wood, to which they bound the body of the person condemned to terminate his life upon it; that the two arms were stretched out upon the cross beam, and nailed, as well as both the feet, to the tree, so that the body of the sufferer, sinking with its own weight, and suspended by its nerves, was speedily reduced to one vast wound, till the violence and slowness of the torment at length delivered him, and the blood drained off drop by drop, thus exhausted the stream of life: supposing us to have detailed all the ignominious circumstances which accompanied the death of Christ: that crown of thorns, that purple robe, that ridiculous sceptre, that wagging of the head, those insulting defiances to save himself, as he had saved others—supposing, I say, all this could be collected into one point of view, we should still believe that he had conveyed to you ideas much too feeble, of the criminality of the Jews.

Nature convulsed, and the elements confounded, shall supply our defects, and serve, this day, as so many preachers. The prodigies which signalized the death of Jesus Christ, shall persuade more powerfully than all the figures of rhetoric. The darkness which covers the earth, the vail of the temple rent in twain, that trembling which had seized the solid globe, those rocks cleft asunder, those yawning graves, those reviving dead, they, they are the pathetic orators who reproach the Jews with the atrocity of their guilt, and who denounce their impending destruction. The sun shrowds himself in the shades of night, as unable to behold this accursed parracide; and what courtly poets said in adulation, namely, that the orb of day clothed himself in mourning, when Julius Cesar was assassinated in the senate-house, was here realized under special direction of divine Providence. The vail of the temple is rent asunder, as on a day of lamentation and woe. The earth trembles, as refusing to support the wretches, whose sacrilegious hands were attacking the life of him who *fastened the foundations thereof*, Job xxxviii. 6. and *founded it upon its bases*, Psa. civ. 5. The rocks cleave, as if to reprove the Jews for the hardness of their hearts. The dead start from their tombs, as coming to condemn the rage of the living.

4. The death of Jesus Christ is a system of morality, in which every virtue is clearly traced. If the divine justice be an object of fear, where is it more powerfully inculcated than on the cross of Jesus Christ? How very terrible does that justice there appear! It goes in pursuit of its victim into the very heaven of heavens. It extends on the altar a Divine Man. It spares not the Son of God, his own Son. And thou, miserable sinner, who canst present nothing to the eyes of thy Judge but

what is odious and abominable, how shalt thou be able to escape his vengeance, if violating the laws of the gospel, thou renderest thyself so much the more worthy of condemnation, that thou hast, in that very gospel, the effectual means of deliverance?

If vice is to be held in detestation, Where is this lesson so forcibly taught as from the cross of Jesus Christ? Let the man who makes light of sin, who forms to himself agreeable images, and feeds on flattering ideas of it, learn, at the cross of Christ, to contemplate it in its true light: let him form a judgment of the cause from the effects: and let him never think of sin, without thinking, at the same time, on the pangs which it cost the Saviour of the world.

If we wish for models to copy, where shall we find models so venerable as on the cross of Christ? Let the proud man go to the cross of Christ; let him there behold the Word in a state of humiliation; let him there contemplate the person who *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant*, and condescended to submit to the punishment of a slave: the person who *being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;* let the proud man look to him, and learn to be humble. Let the voluptuous repair to the cross of Christ; let them there behold the flesh crucified, the senses subdued, pleasure mortified, and learn to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Let the implacable repair to the cross of Christ: let him there contemplate Jesus Christ dying for his enemies, praying even for his murderers, and learn to put on bowels of mercies. Let the murmurer go to the cross of Christ; let him go and study that complete submission which this divine Saviour yielded to the most rigid com-

mands of his Father, and learn to resign himself, in all things, to the will of God.

If we are bound to love our Lawgiver, where can we learn this lesson better than at the cross of Christ? From that cross we hear him crying aloud to the guilty and the wretched: Behold, O sinners, behold the tokens of my affection: behold my hands and my feet: behold this pierced side: behold all these wounds with which my body is torn: behold all those stripes of the justice of my Father, which I endure for your salvation." At a spectacle so moving, is there an obduracy so invincible as not to bend? Is there a heart so hard as to refuse to melt? Is there a love so ardent as not to kindle into a brighter flame?

5. The death of Jesus Christ is a mystery inaccessible to reason; but which all the difficulties that reason can muster, are unable to impair.

It is a mystery inaccessible to reason: let it explain to me that wonderful union of greatness and depression, of ignominy and glory, of an immortal God with a dying man.

Let reason explain to me, how it comes to pass, that though God is unsusceptible of suffering and dying, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, should, however, derive all their efficacy from his nature as God.

Let reason explain to me, how Jesus Christ could satisfy divine justice, and be, at the same time, if the expression be lawful, the Judge and the party condemned, the Avenger and the party avenged, he who satisfied, and he to whom satisfaction was made.

Let reason explain to me, how Jesus, nailed to the cross, is nevertheless worthy of the adoration of men and of angels, so that the Jew who crucifies him, is at once his executioner and his creature.

Let reason explain to me, above all, that mystery of love which we see displayed on the cross of Jesus Christ, and how God, who is so great, and so highly exalted, should have vouchsafed to perform, in behalf of man, a being so low and contemptible, wonders so astonishing. Bend, bend, proud reason, under the weight of these difficulties, and from the extent of these mysteries, learn the narrowness of thy own empire.

It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. It is *the great mystery of Godliness,* 1 Tim. iii. 16. These are *the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man receiveth not,* 1 Cor. ii. 14. This is *the stumbling block of the Jew:* this is *to the Greek foolishness,* 1 Cor. i. 23. *These are the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,* 1 Cor. ii. 9. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but it is a mystery, whose truth and importance all the difficulties which reason can muster, are unable to impair.

The gospel tells us not that greatness and depression, that ignominy and glory, that the mortal and the immortal nature, were confounded in the person of Jesus Christ. It simply informs us, that God, in the depths of his infinite wisdom, knew how to unite depression to greatness, glory to ignominy, the mortal to the immortal nature. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has no title to murmur.

The gospel does not tell us that God, who is unsusceptible of either suffering or death, suffered and died; but that the subject susceptible of suffering, united to the impassible, suffered; that the mortal, united to the immortal subject, died; and that, in virtue of this union, his sufferings and death possess

an infinite value. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has no title to repine.

The gospel does not tell us that Jesus Christ, considered as nailed to a cross, as suffering, as dying, is worthy of adoration ; but, in virtue of his intimate union with deity, that he is an object of adoration to men and to angels. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against it reason has not a title to reclaim.

The gospel does not tell us that man, a being so mean, vile, grovelling, could have merited this prodigy of love; but that God has derived it from himself, as an independent source, and that he considers it as essential to his glory, to acknowledge no other foundation of his benefits, but the misery of those to whom he is pleased to communicate them. This is a mystery inaccessible to reason, but against which reason has not a title to reclaim.

6. There remains only one idea more, under which we wish to represent the death of the Saviour of the world. It is the triumph of Jesus Christ over death, and the consolation of the dying believer. Death may be considered in three points of view. (1) It throws us into the darkness of gloomy night. (2) It summons us to appear before a tremendous tribunal. (3) It strips us of our dearest possessions. Jesus Christ expires on the cross, triumphs over death, in these three several respects.

But it would be necessary to possess the art of renewing your attention, in order successfully to undertake the task of pressing these ideas upon your minds, for they are more than sufficient to furnish matter for a complete new discourse.

I must confine myself, at present, to one consideration, founded on the rending of the vail of the

temple, mentioned in the text. We have already pointed it out as a token of the vengeance of heaven against the Jewish nation. It may likewise be considered in another point of view, conformably to the decision of St. Paul, and to the ideas of the Jews. That people looked on their temple as a figure of the universe. We have, on this subject, passages expressly to the purpose, in Philo and Josephus. All that was on the outside of the most holy place, represented, to them, nature and the elements. The scarlet color of the sanctuary represented fire. The hyacinthine represented the air. The seven branches of the candlestick represented the seven planets. The twelve cakes of shew-bread represented the signs of the Zodiac, and the twelve months of the year. But they said, that the most holy place had been set apart for God: that the Propitiatory was his throne, that the cherubims were his chariot.

On this principle, the vail, which separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, was an image of the obstacles which interposed between the creature and the heavenly habitation, in which God resides. This vail is rent asunder at the death of Jesus Christ; these obstacles are removed; access into the abode of the blessed is opened to us: and this is the spirit of the ceremonial observance prescribed in the Levitical worship: *Into the second went the High Priest alone, once every year, not without blood*, saith St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews: *The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: but Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, by his own blood, entered*

into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. ix. 7, &c.

Death, then, has nothing, henceforward, formidable to the Christian. In the tomb of Jesus Christ are dissipated all the terrors which the tomb of nature presents. In the tomb of nature, O sinner, thou beholdest thy frailty, thy subjection to the bondage of corruption: in the tomb of Jesus Christ thou beholdest thy strength and thy deliverance. In the tomb of nature the punishment of sin stares thee in the face: in the tomb of Jesus Christ thou findest the expiation of it. From the tomb of nature thou hearest the dreadful sentence pronounced against all the posterity of Adam: *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*, Gen. iii. 19. but from the tomb of Jesus Christ issue those accents of consolation. *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*, John xi. 25. In the tomb of nature thou readest this universal, this irrevocable doom written: *It is appointed unto men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. but in the tomb of Jesus Christ, thy tongue is loosed into this triumphant song of praise: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . . Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

All that now remains, is to conclude with a few reflections, by way of recapitulation. My brethren, for some weeks past, there have been traced before your eyes, the successive particulars of the passion and death of the Saviour of the world. You have seen him betrayed, apprehended, arraigned, condemned, and expiring under the most shameful, and the most cruel of all punishments.

Do you comprehend all that is sublime in these truths? Do you feel, in all its extent, the value of

these benefits? Have you, at least, made the attempt to take the dimensions of the love of God, and *to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God,* Eph. iii. 18, 19.

Ah! let us beware, my beloved brethren, that we deceive not ourselves as to this; after so many distinguished tokens of the grace of God, we are going to become the most wretched, or the happiest of all creatures. Our condition admits not of mediocrity. The two interesting extremes present themselves to view—the extreme of justice, and the extreme of mercy. We are going to prove all that is mild and gentle in the peace of God, or all that is tremendous in his indignation; and that blood which we have seen poured out, must be upon our heads either to attract, or to repel the thunder.

His blood be on us, and on our children, Matt. xxvii. 25. This was the imprecation of those barbarous Jews, who with importunity demanded the death of Jesus Christ, and glutted themselves with his sufferings. But it was, in a far different sense, the interior voice of those believing souls, who entered into the design of God, who, by faith, sprinkled themselves with this blood, which was to form the bond of union between heaven and earth.

His blood be on us, and on our children. This is the voice which now resounds from ear to ear, and which must be accomplished on this assembly, in one sense or another. Yes, this blood, shall be upon you, in vengeance and malediction, as it was upon ungrateful Jerusalem, in your families to trouble their peace, in your plans to defeat them, in your establishments to sap them to the founda-

tion, in your consciences to harrow them up, in your death-bed to darken it with horror and despair, and through all the periods of eternity, demanding the expiation of the crime, of having trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, and of having crucified afresh the Lord of Glory. Or it will be upon you, yes, this blood will be upon you, to strengthen you under all your infirmities, to preserve you in the hour of temptation, to console you under the pressure of calamity, to speak peace to the troubled conscience, to support you in dying agony, to render your death blessed, and eternity triumphant.

I dwell for a moment on these last ideas, and, under an illusion of charity, I apply them to all those who compose my audience. Happy they, to whom they are applicable of a truth! To have been attentive to the history of the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world, which, for some time past, has been the great subject of our address, to have traced it through all its successive circumstances, to have felt the necessity, and to have penetrated into the design of the whole; to have applied to ourselves the lessons which it inculcates, the consolations which it supplies, the hope which it inspires: to deduce, from those grand objects, consequences affecting the conduct of life, tending to promote sanctity of manners, superiority to the world, love to a God so rich in mercy, desire of possessing that in perfection, of which displays so astonishing convey ideas so sublime——

After this, to come next Lord's day to the table of Jesus Christ, with the understanding convinced, the heart overflowing, the soul penetrated: to discern, in the bread and the wine of which we are to partake, the symbols of that death, whose memo-

rial the church is celebrating: to promise unto God, over those august pledges of his love, to render him love for love, and life for life: to expand the heart in such emotions; to communicate in such a disposition, and to wait for death under such impressions—these are the loftiest objects which man can propose to his meditation. This is the highest point of perfection which we are capable of attaining, in the course of this mortal pilgrimage. This is the purest delight that we can taste in this valley of tears.

I trust, my dearly beloved brethren, that these sublime objects shall not have been presented to you in vain. I trust that so many exhortations will not fall to the ground totally without success. I trust that these first emotions, which it is impossible to withhold from an expiring Saviour, will not be *as the early cloud, and as the morning dew*, Hos. vi. 4. which appear for a moment, and are dissipated in a moment. I trust they will henceforward engage your heart, your mind, your whole life, and that they will accompany you to the bed of death. I trust, that when this awful period comes, instead of that mortal reluctance, instead of those insupportable forebodings which unrepented guilt inspires, the image of Jesus Christ crucified, present to your eyes; what do I say, of Jesus Christ crucified? Of Jesus Christ raised from the dead, glorious, sitting at the right hand of his Father; of Jesus Christ, presenting continually before his eyes the value of that blood which he shed for the salvation of the human race; of Jesus Christ, extending his arms to receive your departing spirit, that he may bind it up *in the bundle of life:* I trust that this image will dispel all the terrors of death, and thus prepare you to pass

from the dispensation of grace, to the dispensation of glory.

In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld the Son of God invested with *the form of a servant;* in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him arrayed in all splendor and magnificence. In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld the King of Kings attended by an humble train of disciples of but mean appearance: in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him accompanied by the heavenly hosts, legions of angels and archangels, of the cherubim and of the seraphim. In the dispensation of grace, you have beheld Jesus Christ expiring ignominiously upon a cross: in the dispensation of glory, you shall behold him in the clouds of heaven, judging the quick and the dead. In the dispensation of grace, you have heard the lips of your Saviour thus speaking peace to your soul: *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:* in the dispensation of glory, you shall hear this decision from his mouth: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world,* Matt. xxv. 34. May God of his infinite mercy grant it! To him be honor and glory now and for ever. Amen.

N. B. The next Sermon in the series, that on THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, which is the eighth of Vol. II. of Mr. Robinson's selection, may be read with advantage in this place.

SERMON V.

OBSCURE FAITH:

OR,

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING, WITHOUT HAVING SEEN.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

STRANGE is the condition in which Providence has placed the Christian. He is ever walking in the midst of darkness and obscurity. He is placed between two periods of gloominess: between the cloudy night of the past, and the still darker night of futurity. Does he wish to ascertain the truths which are the object of his faith? They are founded on facts; and in order to be assured of those facts, he must force his way backward, through more than eighteen hundred centuries: he must dig truth and falsehood out of the rubbish of tradition; out of the captious systems of the enemies of Christianity; nay, sometimes,

out of the pious frauds, on which an indiscreet zeal has attempted to establish it.

If he wishes to ascertain the reality of that blessedness which is the object of his hope, he must plunge himself in quest of it, into periods which do not as yet subsist. He must *walk by faith, and not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. he must depart, as Abraham did, and leave *his kindred and his father's house, without knowing*, precisely *whither* he goes, Heb. xi. 8. It is necessary that this persuasion, if I may so express myself, should form a new creation of things, which have no real existence as to him: or, to use the expression of St. Paul, his *faith* must be *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. Now, it is to such obscurity, it is to such darkness, that a man is called to sacrifice all that the human mind is taught to consider as the greatest reality and certainty, I mean the decisions of reason, and the felicities of a present world. What a situation! What a strange situation!

But be it as it may, we, this day, place ourselves, my brethren, between these two dark clouds; between the night of the past, and the night of futurity. In what are the duties of this day to terminate? What is the language suitable to the day which is now passing? *I believe: I hope. I believe* that *the Word was made flesh*, that he suffered, that he died, that he rose again: this is the night of the past. *I hope* that, in virtue of this incarnation, of these sufferings, of this resurrection, *an entrance shall be ministered unto me abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. i. 11. and that I shall partake in the felicity of our ever blessed God: this is the night of futurity. *I believe*, and to that

belief I immolate all the ideas of my intellect, all the systems of my reason. *I hope*, and to those hopes I immolate all the attractives of sensual appetite, all the charms of the visible creation: and were *all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*, Matt. iv. 8. to be put in my offer, on the condition that I should renounce my hopes, I would consider the former *but dung*, Phil. iii. 8. and cleave to the latter as the only real and solid good.

Who is there among you, my brethren, who feels himself capable of this effort of mind? I acknowledge him to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. He may rest assured that he shall be received as a worthy partaker at that mysterious table, which sovereign wisdom is once more, this day, furnishing before our eyes. But he may likewise rest assured, that his felicity, veiled, invisible as it is, shall remain more firm and unshaken, than all those things which are the idols of the children of this world. To meditation on this interesting subject I devote the present discourse, to which you cannot apply an attention too profound.

The occasion of the words of our text it would be necessary to indicate. Which of my hearers can be such a novice in the gospel history as to be ignorant of it? Thomas was not present with the other apostles, when Jesus Christ appeared unto them, after he had left the tomb. His absence produced incredulity. He refuses to yield to the united testimony of the whole apostolic college. He solemnly protests that there is but one way to convince him of the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, namely to produce him alive. No, says he, *except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will*

not believe, John xx. 25. Jesus Christ is pleased to adapt his condescension to the weakness of this disciple, and to gratify a pretension so arrogant and rash: he appears to Thomas, and says to him. *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and trust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing*, ver. 27. Thomas is drawn different ways; by the shame of having disbelieved, and the joy which he felt in being convinced by the testimony of his own senses, and exclaims, *My Lord and my God!* Upon this Jesus Christ addresses him in the words of the text: *Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

You perceive from the occasion on which the words were spoken, that they point, in the first instance, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We shall take care, accordingly, not to lose sight of this object. Nevertheless, as the proposition of our blessed Lord is general, we shall take it in all its generality: and shall discourse to you of that obscure faith which reverts to periods long since past, and looks forward into periods hidden in a remote futurity. The *nature* of obscure faith; the *excellency* of obscure faith: this is the simple division of my present discourse. Or, to convey a still clearer idea of my design, under the first head, I shall endeavor to unfold the ambiguity of that expression; *to believe without having seen;* in the second, I shall evince the truth of this proposition; *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

I. Let us, in the first place, endeavor to explain the *nature* of obscure faith: or, as we have announced the subject of this first branch of our dis-

course, let us attempt to unfold the ambiguity of the expression: *Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* By obscure faith, we here mean, that which is founded, not on what a man hath seen with his own eyes, not on what he has discovered to be true by the powers of his own reason, but on testimony worthy of credit.

Let this definition be carefully remarked: and let this be constantly kept in sight, that though the faith of which we are speaking, has not a certainty resting on the evidence of the senses, or on the conclusions of right reason, it has a certainty perfect in its kind, that which rests on a testimony worthy of credit. Take care, therefore, not to confound an obscure faith with a fluctuating, unsettled, ill-founded faith. They are two things perfectly distinct, and it is impossible to distinguish them too carefully. The obscurity of which we are going to treat, is by no means incompatible with evidence.

In order to comprehend it fully, it is necessary to distinguish two species of evidence: evidence of the object, and evidence of testimony. We call *evidence of the object*, that which rests, as I have said, either on the deposition of the senses, or on the discernment of sound reason. I believe that you are now assembled within the circumference of these walls: I believe it, because I see it so. The evidence which I have on this subject, is that species of evidence which I have denominated *evidence of the object*, and which is founded on the deposition of the senses. In like manner, I believe that so long as you remain within the circumference of these walls, you are not in your own habitations. The evidence which I have to support this belief, is still that which I have denominated *evi-*

dence of the object, namely, that which is founded on the light of my own reason, whereby I am assured, in a manner which leaves me not the liberty of so much as doubting, that so long as you remain within this temple, you cannot possibly be in any other place.

But if there be *evidence of object*, there is likewise *evidence of testimony*. I believe there is a vast region on the globe, called the kingdom of Persia. I have evidence to support this belief: not *the evidence of object*, but *the evidence of testimony*. I believe that there is such a kingdom, though I have never seen it with my own eyes: but there is such a cloud of witnesses, of undoubted credit, who assure me of it, that the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object. In like manner, I believe that a vessel of such or such a construction, and of so many tons burthen, requires such a depth of water. I believe this, not because my reason has by its own powers made the discovery, for I never made mechanism of this kind my study; but the unanimous deposition of all who understand the art of ship-building, gives me full assurance of the fact, fills the place of my own intimate perception, and the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object.

Having thus explained our meaning, when we say that faith is obscure, when we say that the Christian believeth what he seeth not, we do not, by this, understand that he believeth in what is destitute of proof: we only mean that he believeth the truth of facts of which he has not been an eye witness: that he believeth in truths which he could not have discovered by his own reason, and that he hopes for a felicity of which he has not a distinct idea: but he believes those facts, on the unanimous testimony of a great number of witnesses,

who could not possibly have acted in concert to deceive him: he believes those truths on an infallible testimony: he hopes, on that same testimony, namely, on the word of God himself. In all these things, the evidence of testimony supplies the evidence of object.

That it is of this kind of faith, we are to understand these words in our text, *Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed*, the occasion on which they were pronounced permits us not to doubt. Of what was Jesus Christ speaking to Thomas? Of his own resurrection. Who are the persons he had in view, whom Providence was afterwards to call to believe without having seen? Those who could not possibly be the eye witnesses of that resurrection. But were the persons who should be called to believe the doctrine of the resurrection, to believe it without satisfying reasons of its truth and certainty? By no means. Call to your recollection a part of what we submitted to your consideration on this subject, on another occasion.* We have, in confirmation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1. Presumptions. 2. Proofs, and, 3. Demonstrations.

1. The circumstances of the death of the Saviour, and of his burial, furnish us with *presumptions* on this subject. Jesus Christ died: his body was deposited in the tomb; but a few days afterwards was not to be found there. We thence presume that Jesus Christ is risen again. If Jesus Christ be not risen, his body must have been conveyed away: but how is it possible to maintain such an assertion? To whom shall we impute such

* The reader is referred to the sermon on *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, page 199, &c. of Sermon VIII. Vol. II. of Mr. Robinson's selection.

conveyance? Not surely to his enemies. Could they be suspected of a design to contribute to his glory, by giving currency to the report of his resurrection? It can as little be imputed to his disciples. They had no inclination to do so. For how could men, so notoriously timid, have formed an enterprize so daring and dangerous, and that in favor of a man, (I go on the supposition that Jesus Christ did not rise again) who had thus abused their credulity? But had their inclination been ever so strong, was it in their power either to surprize or to discomfit a guard forewarned of the design? These I call *presumptions*.

2. The testimony of the apostles furnishes with *proofs* of the resurrection. This testimony possesses no less than eight distinct characters, which raise it beyond the reach of all suspicion: i, The nature of the witnesses, who had neither the credid, nor the riches, nor the eloquence necessary to practice an imposture on mankind: ii, The number of those witnesses, amounting to more than five hundred: iii, The nature of the facts which are the subject of their evidence, things in which it was impossible they should deceive themselves, things which they had seen, heard, and perceived in the most sensible and palpable manner: iv, The uniformity of their testimony, which in no one instance ever contradicted itself: v, The judges before whom their evidence was given; judges expert in the art of involving cheats in self-contradiction, but who never could detect any in the witnesses of whom we are speaking: vi, The place where their testimony was published; for had the apostles gone and published the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in regions remote from that where the fact could be completely sifted, they might have fallen under suspicion; but they attest it to the face of the

whole city of Jerusalem itself: vii, The time when this testimony was published, respecting which the same reasoning applies which does to the circumstance of place: viii, The motives by which those witnesses were actuated, and which could be no other but the satisfying of their own consciences, as so far from having a temporal interest to promote, by the publication of this event, every temporal interest pressed in the opposite direction.

3. But we have likewise, of this truth, demonstrations properly so called. With these we are furnished in the miraculous gifts communicated to those who attest it: of which we cannot entertain any doubt, without taxing with extravagance three sorts of persons, equally clear of all ground of suspicion on such an occasion: i, The apostles, who give the history of those miracles, and who relate in a manner the best adapted to expose imposture, on the supposition of their having been impostors: ii, Their enemies, who in their writings against them, have not denied that they wrought miracles, but that these miracles were a proof of the truth of their doctrine: iii, Finally, their proselytes, who had the greatest imaginable interest in examining whether it was true that the apostles wrought miracles, who had all possible opportunities of ascertaining the fact, and who sacrificed their property, their reputation, their life, for a religion entirely resting on this truth—The apostles work miracles. These we call so many demonstrations.

This recapitulation sufficiently instructs us, that we are not called upon to believe an event so very extraordinary, as if it were destitute of proof: on the contrary, we believe it on proofs clear, cogent, and decisive. When, therefore, Jesus Christ saith, *Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have*

believed, he means not to say, that it is blessed to believe things destitute of evidence: he speaks only of things which have not the evidence of object, but which have that of testimony.

Let us pursue this thought a little farther. The idea which we have suggested of obscure faith, distinguishes it from three kinds of conviction, which are but too frequently confounded with it: the faith extorted by tyranny; the faith generated in the brain of the enthusiast; and the faith of the superstitious.

(1) The faith of which we speak, must be carefully distinguished from the faith which is extorted by tyranny. We do not here understand that which violence would attempt to produce by the terror of punishment. Never did racks, gibbets, and stakes produce, in the soul, any thing like conviction in favor of a religion, which pretended to establish itself by arguments so odious and detestable. But there is a tyranny of a different kind, which has produced believers not a few. By dint of attesting fictions, men have forced themselves into credit: by dint of insolent pretentions, to infallibility, the simple have sometimes been prevailed upon to admit it: and the simple generally constitute the bulk of mankind.

We denominate that the *faith extorted by tyranny*, which is yielded to the insolent decisions of a doctor, who gives himself out as infallible, without proving it; or to fabulous legends, unsupported by any respectable testimony. How, under the pretext that I am bound to believe facts, which I may never have seen with my own eyes, am I laid under an obligation to swallow every thing that a legendary is pleased to tell me? How, under the pretext that I am bound to believe truths which are above the reach of my reason, am I laid under an

obligation to believe every thing proposed to me by a man who may be practising upon my credulity? And upon my refusing to believe on such a foundation, shall I be taxed with being incredulous like Thomas, and with saying as he did: *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

If you would have me believe the facts which you propose, produce me the proofs which support them, if not as complete as those which assure me of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, at least such as are somewhat of a similar nature: and if you wish I should consider you as infallible, like the apostles produce me proofs of your infallibility, equivalent to those which the apostles produced of theirs. But if on examining such pretended facts, I discover that they are fictions merely; if on examining the foundation upon which your infallibility rests, I find that the men who give themselves out for infallible, while they lay claim to the infallibility of the apostles, are undermining the doctrine of the apostles, I shall not reckon myself obliged to pay the slightest deference to their decisions. The faith which these decisions attempt to produce, will be faith extorted by tyranny, and which will have no relation whatever to that faith which Jesus Christ expects from his disciples, and which is, in truth, obscure, but, nevertheless, well-founded; which is destitute, indeed, of the evidence of object, but which is ever accompanied with the evidence of testimony.

(2) In the second place, the faith of which we are treating, must be distinguished from that of the enthusiast: I mean that of certain Christians, who found the reasons which induce them to believe, entirely on such and such impulses, which

they pretend to be the operation of the Spirit of God: impulses destitute of illumination, and which determine the person thus agitated, to yield his assent to a proposition unsupported by proof, or, at most, recommended by an air of probability. One of the marks which distinguish false zeal from true, is, that this last, I mean true zeal, sacrifices its own glory to that of religion, and is infinitely better pleased to acknowledge its own error, than to spread the slightest cloud over that pure and genial light in which religion is arrayed. A man, on the contrary, who is actuated by a false zeal, sacrifices, without hesitation, the glory of religion to his own; and maintains, at the expence of truth itself, the errors which he has advanced.

This has been found to be the case with certain eminent names, on the subject of our present discussion. The vehemence of controversies which have been carried on, respecting the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul of believers, has frequently carried some of the disputants farther than they themselves intended. In the heat of argumentation, they have asserted, that the action of the Holy Spirit, which operates in the faithful, is carried so far as to give them a degree of faith, superior to the reasons which they have for believing. When pressed by their adversaries, they ought to have acknowledged this to be one of the propositions which one is tempted to advance in the warmth of dispute, and which candor, without hesitation, is disposed to retract, after the heat has subsided. But this were a sacrifice too great for self-love to make: it is deemed better that religion should suffer from the intemperate zeal of the sophist, than that the sophist should correct his hasty position, by the illumination of religion.

Thus, in order to support one absurdity, a still

greater absurdity has been advanced. It has been maintained, not only that the following proposition is true, namely, the impulse of the Holy Spirit gives us faith, superior to the reasons which we have for believing: but this is absolutely necessary: for, it has been alledged, that the Christian religion being destitute of proofs which enforce assent, all those who should refuse to believe what is destitute of this kind of proof, must, in so doing, refuse to believe the Christian religion.

God forbid that we should attempt to defend, with weapons so empoisoned, the truths of religion! It was not thus that they were defended by Jesus Christ and his apostles. They called on men to believe: but they, at the same time, adduced proof of what they wished to be received as the object of faith. The spirit of God, undoubtedly, operates on the soul of every one who implores his assistance; but it is by making them feel the force of the proofs, not by convincing them of what it is impossible to prove. And who could be condemned for not having believed, were Christianity destitute of sufficient proof? Would not the infidel be warranted in alledging: "I am not to blame, if I withhold my assent to such a proposition: I do not feel that impulse which engages one to believe what cannot be proved?" But the notion which we have given of faith, confounds every one who refuses to believe. We say, with Jesus Christ of the unbelievers of his time: *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*, John iii. 19.

(3) Finally, the notion which we have given of faith, distinguish it from that of the superstitious. To believe, in the view of doing honor to religion, a doctrine weakly proved, whatever may be the

origin of that doctrine, is to have a *superstitious faith*. Under this description may be ranked what has been denominated *faith extorted by tyranny*, and *faith generated in the brain of the enthusiast*. But we have, under this particular, a different kind of superstition in view. To believe a truth completely proved, but without having examined the proofs which support it, is to have the faith of superstition. A truth, of which I perceive not the proofs, is no truth with respect to me. What renders my disposition of soul acceptable in the sight of God, when I receive what he is pleased to reveal to me, is my reception of it as an intelligent being, after having weighed the motives which induced me to give it welcome; after having discovered, on putting them in the balance with the opposite motives, that the first had greatly the preponderancy over the others. But to believe a truth with precipitation, to believe it without knowledge, is mere superstition. If it should determine you to declare yourself on the side of truth, it must be entirely by chance, and which may, to-morrow plunge you into error, as it induces you, to-day, to embrace the truth.

Obscure faith, then, is not a persuasion unsupported by proof; it is, in truth, destitute of the proofs which constitute the evidence of object; but not of those which constitute the evidence of testimony, as was from the beginning affirmed, and which it was necessary, oftener than once, to repeat.

SERMON V.

PART II.

OBSCURE FAITH:

OR,

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING, WITHOUT HAVING SEEN.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

WE have endeavored to explain the *nature* of obscure faith; and now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To point out the *excellency* of this obscure faith. After having attempted to unfold the ambiguity of the expression in my text, *to believe without having seen,* we must endeavor to evince the truth of it, by demonstrating this proposition, announced by our blessed Lord, *blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

These words admit of a very simple, and a very natural commentary, which we shall first produce, in order to explain them. The point in question is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thomas is to be convinced of the certainty of it, by nothing short of the testimony of his own eyes: this mode of producing conviction, was going, henceforward, to cease. Jesus Christ was shortly to leave the world: a cloud was soon to receive him out of the sight of the inhabitants of this earth: *The heavens must* now *receive* him, *until the times of the restitution of all things*, Acts iii. 21. The angels declared to the apostles, as they stood rapt in astonishment at beholding their beloved Master disappear: *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*, Acts i. 11. The disposition of Thomas's mind, therefore, was going, henceforth, to become universally fatal. Every one who should say with him, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*, must die and perish in unbelief. There was to be, henceforward, no other way but this, of believing without having seen, no other means of arriving at a participation in the felicity of believers: *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

This commentary contains much good sense. It does not, however, seem to me to have exhausted the whole meaning of Jesus Christ. God is supremely good: nothing appeared to him too dear for the salvation of the human race: he made choice of means the best adapted to the execution of this great work. If he has made choice of means the best adapted to the salvation of the human

race, he has likewise made choice of the properest method of enabling us to avail ourselves of the appointed means, and that method is obscure faith. Why so? This is the point which we must attempt to elucidate: and some time ago, you will please to recollect, that we undertook this task. For when that difficulty was urged against us, which unbelievers make the subject of their triumph: "Wherefore did not Jesus Christ shew himself alive after his passion, to his judges, to his executioners?" We made this reply, that the gift of working miracles, bestowed on the apostles, and on the first Christians, constituted a proof more irresistible of his resurrection, than if he had shewn himself then, nay, than if he were to shew himself risen, at this day.

It might be retorted upon us, "That these two proofs, that of miracles performed by his disciples, and that of his personal manifestation, were not incompatible with each other: Jesus Christ might first have shewn himself alive after his resurrection; here would have been one kind of proof: he might afterwards, upon his ascension, have sent the Holy Spirit to his apostles; this would have consituted a second kind of proof. These two kinds of proof united, would have placed the truth of his resurrection far beyond the reach of all suspicion. Wherefore did he not employ them? Wherefore did he not give to a truth of his religion so interesting, and of such capital importance, every species of proof of which it is susceptible?" To this we still reply, that obscure faith was a method far more proper to conduct us to salvation, than a clear faith, founded on the testimony of the senses, or on the personal discoveries of the believer himself: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

A principle which we have on other occasions laid down, will justify this reply. God has placed us in this world, as in a place of probation and sacrifice. It is his will that the manner in which we correspond to this view of his providence, should determine our everlasting destiny. Let us try clearly to explain this principle, before we apply it to the subject in hand.

In strictness of speech, God will not proportion the celestial felicity which he reserves for us, to the exertions which we make to obtain it. Did God observe the rules of an exact distribution in this respect, there is not a single person in the world who durst flatter himself with being a partaker in that felicity: because there is no one, I speak of even the greatest saints, who does all that he ought, and all that he might do, toward the attainment of it. Much more, supposing us to have done all that we could, and all that we ought to do, to be admitted to a participation in this blessedness, our utmost efforts never could bear any proportion to it. We must still say of every thing we undertake, in order to salvation, what St. Paul says of the most cruel sufferings of the martyrs: *They are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,* Rom. viii. 18. The most extravagant thought, accordingly, that ever could find its way into the mind of man, is that of the persons who maintain the possibility of meriting heaven by their good works, nay, the possibility of a man's meriting the kingdom of heaven for others, after having earned it for himself.

But though there is not a proportion of rigorous justice, between the heavenly felicity, and the efforts which we make to attain it, there is a proportion of equity and of establishment. Permit me to explain what I mean by these words: God

will not save mankind, unless they exert themselves to obtain salvation. Had it been his will to extend indiscriminating favor, he had only to open, without reservation, the path to heaven: he had only to exert the supreme power, which he possesses over our souls, to infuse into them virtue and emulation, and to put us in possession of a felicity already completely acquired, without subjecting us to the necessity of employing indefatigable and unintermitting efforts, in order to the acquiring of it. But his views respecting man are altogether different from this. Hence it is that he is pleased to represent the life of a Christian, as a narrow path, in which he must walk; as a race which he must run; as a task which he must perform; as a warfare which he has to accomplish. For this reason it is, that salvation is represented to us, as a victory to be won, as a prize to be gained, as a kingdom which can be *taken* only by the *violent*. God, then, has placed us in this world, as in a place of probation and sacrifice: it is his sovereign good pleasure, that the manner in which we correspond to his gracious views, shall decide our everlasting destination.

Let us apply this principle to the subject under discussion: to that obscure faith, which discerns, in the darkness of the past, those facts on which the great truths of religion rest, as the building on its foundation: to that obscure faith, which penetrates into the darkness of futurity, there to discover the blessedness which religion proposes to us as the object of hope.

1. Let us apply the principle laid down to that obscure faith, which discerns, in the darkness of the past, those facts on which the great truths of religion rest. There is more difficulty in attaining a discernment of the truth in the darkness of the

past, than in beholding the object with a man's own eyes. It is admitted. Had Jesus Cnrist appeared alive to his judges and executioners, after his resurrection ; were he to appear to us, at this day, as risen from the dead, we should have much less difficulty in believing the certainty of an event on which the whole Christian religion hinges. It is admitted. There would be no occasion, in order to attain the conviction of it, to employ extensive reading, to consult doctors, to surmount the trouble of profound meditation, to suspend pleasure, to interrupt business. It is admitted. But the very thing which constitutes your objection, furnishes me with a reply. The trouble which you must take, before you can acquire conviction of the resurrection of the Saviour of the world, the extensive reading that is necessary, the consultation of learned men, those efforts of profound meditation which you must employ, that suspension of your pleasures, that interruption of your worldly business—all, all enter into the plan of your salvation: it is the will of God that you should exert yourselves diligently for the attainment of it.

Let us suppose the case of two Christians: the first shall be St. Thomas ; the second a Christian of our own days. Let us suppose both the two equally convinced of the resurrection of the Saviour of the world ; but acquiring their conviction in two different ways : Thomas convinced by the testimony of his senses, the modern Christian, by the attentive examination of the proofs which establish the truth of it : Whether of these two Christians, according to your judgment, expresses the greater love of the truth ? Whether of these two Christians makes the greater sacrifice, in order to arrive at the knowledge of it ? The one has only to open his eyes, the other must enter on a course

of deep and serious reflection. The one has only to reach forth his hand, to touch the print of the wounds of Jesus Christ; the other must exert all the powers of his mind, in sifting the proofs, on which the doctrine is established. The one expects that the Saviour should present himself to him, and say: *Be not faithless, but believing*, Jo. xx. 27. The other goes forth seeking after the Lord Jesus, through the darkness in which he is pleased to involve himself. Is it not evident that this last expresses incomparably greater love for the truth, and offers up to it greater sacrifices than the first? This last, then, corresponds better to the idea of probation and sacrifice, to which we are called, during the time which, by the will of God, we are destined to pass in this world. *Blessed* therefore, with respect to the obscurity of the past, *blessed is he who has not seen, and yet has believed.*

2. The same principle is applicable to what concerns the night of futurity. It would require but feeble efforts, and would exhibit no mighty sacrifice, for a man to deny himself the delights of a present life, if the joys of the Paradise of God were disclosed to his eyes.

But how great is the magnanimity of the Christian, how wonderful the fortitude of the Martyr, and, in propriety of speech, all Christians are martyrs, who, resting on the promises of God alone, immolates to the desire of possessing a future and heavenly felicity, all that is dear and valuable to him upon the earth? The present, usually, makes the most powerful impression on the mind of man. An object, in proportion as it becomes exceeding remote, in some measure loses its reality, with respect to us. The impression made upon the mind by sensible things, engrosses almost its whole capacity, and leaves little, if any, portion of its at-

tention, for the contemplation of abstract truths. Farther, when abstract meditations dwell on well-known objects, they possibly may fix attention. But when they turn on objects of which we have no distinct idea, they are little calculated to arrest and impress.

A Christian, a man actuated by that obscure faith, whose excellency we are endeavoring to unfold, surmounts all these difficulties. I see neither the God who has given me the promises of an eternal felicity, nor that eternal felicity which he hath promised me. This God conceals himself from my view. I must go from principle to principle, and from one conclusion to another, in order to attain full assurance that he is. I find still much greater difficulty in acquiring the knowledge of what he is, than in rising up to a persuasion of his existence. The very idea of an infinite Being confounds and overwhelms me. If I have only a very imperfect idea of the God who hath promised me eternal felicity, I know still less wherein that felicity consists.

I am told of a *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 44: a body glorious, incorruptible: I am told of unknown faculties: of an unknown state: of an unknown economy. I am told of *new heavens and a new earth*: I am promised the society of certain spirits, with whom I have never enjoyed any kind of intercourse: I am told of a place entirely different from that which I now inhabit; and when I would represent to myself that felicity, under ideas of the pleasures of sense, under ideas of worldly magnificence, I am told that this felicity has no resemblance to any of these things. Nevertheless, on the word of this God, of whom I have a knowledge so very imperfect, but whose existence and perfections are so certain, I am ready to sacrifice

every thing, for a felicity of which I have a still more imperfect knowledge, than I have of the God who hath promised it to me.

There is nothing more delightful to me than to live in the bosom of my country and kindred. My native air has in it something congenial to my constitution; nevertheless, were God to call me as he did Abraham; were he to say to me, in the words which he addressed to that Patriarch: *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house*, Gen. xii. 1. I will, without hesitation, obey: I will depart, without delay, for *the land* which he shall please to *shew me*.

Nothing can be more delightful to me, than the possession of an only and beloved son: nothing appears to me so dreadful, as separation from a person so dear to me; but, above all, there is nothing which inspires so much horror, as the thought of plunging, with my own hand, the dagger into his bosom. Nevertheless, when it shall please God to say to me: *Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*, Gen. xxii. 2. I will take that son, that object of my tenderest affection, that centre of my desires, and of my complacency; I will bind him; I will stretch him out upon the pile; I will lift up my arm to pierce his side, persuaded that the favor of God is a blessing beyond all comparison, more precious, than the possession of even that beloved portion of myself.

There is nothing capable of more agreeably flattering my ambition and self-love, than to talk with authority: than to govern a whole world with despotic sway: than to rule over the nations, which look up to their sovereigns as so many divinities; nevertheless, were a competition to be established

between a throne, a crown, and the blessedness of the heavenly world, I would *esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt:* I would *choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,* Heb. xi. 25.

There is nothing to which my nature is more reluctant, than the suffering of violent pain. The idea of the rack, of being burnt at a stake, makes me shudder. I am convulsed all over at the sight of a fellow-creature exposed to torture of this kind. What would it be, were I myself called to endure them? Nevertheless, the lofty ideas I have conceived, of a felicity which I have not seen, will elevate even me, above the feelings of sense and nature: I will mount a scaffold: I will extend myself upon the pile which is to reduce me to ashes; I will surrender my body to the executioners to be mangled; and amidst all these torments, I will still cry out with triumph: *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,* Rom. viii. 18. *for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight,* Psa. cxliv. 1.

I ask, my brethren, does not a man in such circumstances, correspond incomparably better to the idea of probation and sacrifice, than the person who should behold, with his own eyes, the eternal recompense of reward which God has prepared for his children? The proposition of our blessed Lord, therefore, is verified with regard to periods still future, as with regard to periods already past. The vocation of the Christian, then, is to pierce through

all those clouds, in which God has been pleased to envelop the religion of Jesus Christ; the vocation of the Christian is to pierce through the obscurity of the past, and the obscurity of the future; it is to make study supply the want of experience, and hope the want of vision. The felicity of the Christian depends on the manner in which he corresponds to this high vocation: *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* This was the point to be demonstrated.

It highly concerns us, my brethren, to fulfil this twofold engagement, and thus to attain, at length, supreme felicity, in the way which it has pleased God to trace for us. Let us,

1. Pierce through the obscurity of the past. Let us learn to make study supply the want of experience. Let us diligently apply ourselves to acquire the knowledge of our religion, by seeking after assurance of the truth of those facts, on which it is established. Of these, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the chief: for *if Jesus Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . . ye are yet in your sins,* 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17. But, thanks be to God, this fact, of such capital importance, is supported by proofs which it is impossible for any reasonable man to resist.

But it requires a considerable degree of attention, of serious recollection, to study these with advantage. To this study there must, of necessity, be sacrificed some worldly employment, some party of pleasure: a man must sometimes retire into his closet, and get the better of that languor which deep thought and close reading naturally produce. But O, how nobly is he rewarded for all his labor, by the copious harvest which it yields!

What delight in discovering that God has proportioned the weight of the proofs by which his religion is supported, to the importance of each of its parts! What consolation to see that this truth, *Jesus Christ is risen*, this truth which gives us the assurance that God has accepted the sacrifice of his Son, that the work of our salvation is accomplished, that access to the throne of grace is opened to us, that the disorders introduced by sin are repaired! What consolation to see that a truth of such high importance is so completely ascertained, and that so many presumptions, so many proofs, so many demonstrations, concur in establishing it!

What satisfaction is it, thus to transport ourselves, in thought, into the apostolic ages, there to contemplate the wonders of redemption! For this is the effect which study produces, of those exquisitely conclusive and irresistible proofs, which demonstrate the truth of this great event: it transports us into the apostolic ages: it enables us to behold with the mind's eye what we cannot behold with eyes of the body. After having thus torn up incredulity by the roots, with what an extasy of holy delight may the Christian approach the table of the Lord, with full conviction of soul, and say to him with Thomas: "*My Lord and my God.* The heart-affecting persuasion I have of what thy love has done for me, elevates, penetrates, overwhelms me. It will render easy to me the most painful proofs which it may please thee to prescribe to my gratitude. *My Lord and my God, my Lord and my God*, I regret all the time I have devoted to the world and its pleasures: henceforward I will think of thee, and thee only: I will live to thee, and thee only. Accept the dedication which I now make. Bear with the weakness in which it is made: approve the sincerity with which I this

day come to break off the remaining attachments which fetter me down to the world; and to bind closer those of my communion with thee, the only worthy object of love and desire."

How blessed shall we be, my beloved brethren, in thus penetrating through the obscurity of the past! *Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

2. But let us likewise penetrate through the darkness of futurity. Let hope supply to us the want of possession. How shall it, henceforth, be possible for us to entertain suspicion against the faithfulness of God's promises? Behold on that table, what God is capable of doing in our behalf. Behold by what miracles of love—O miracles of the love of God, we want language to express thee, as we want ideas to conceive thee! Butbehold on that table, behold by what miracles of love he has prevailed to make us the rich present of his own Son, to expose him, for our sakes, to all that series of suffering, which has been the subject of our meditation during the weeks which commemorate the passion.

Is it possible for us to believe, that a God so gracious and compassionate, should have created us, his people, to render us for ever miserable? Is it possible to believe that a God so great, and so munificent, should limit his bounty toward us, to the good things granted us here below, to that air which we breathe, to the light which illuminates this world, to the aliments which sustain these bodies? Nay, is it possible for us to believe that he should permit us to remain long in this world, exposed to so many public and private calamities: to war, to famine, to mortality, to the pestilence, to sickness, to death? Away with suspicions so injurious to the goodness of our God. *He that*

spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32. Let us indulge ourselves in feasting on the deliciousness of this hope: let us not destroy the relish of it, by wallowing in the pleasures of sense: let us habituate ourselves to pursue happiness, in a conviction of the felicity prepared for us in another world.

This hope, it is true, replenished as it is with such unspeakable sweetness, is not without a mixture of bitterness. It is a hard thing to be enabled to form such transporting ideas of a felicity placed still so far beyond our reach. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick*, Prov. xiii. 12. But we shall not be suffered to languish long. *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 37. Yet a few short moments more, and our great deliverer, Death, will come to our relief. Let us not stand aghast at his approach. It is not becoming in Christians, who cannot attain the perfection of happiness till after death, to be still afraid of dying. Let us, on the contrary, anticipate the hour of death, by the exercise of a holy ardor and zeal. Let us look for it with a submissive impatience: *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, Phil. i. 23. than any thing we can possibly enjoy in this valley of tears. *He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly:* let us cry out in return, "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus*, Rev. xxii. 20. Come, Redeemer of my soul: I adore thee amidst the clouds in which thou concealest thyself; but vouchsafe to scatter them. After I have enjoyed the felicity of believing without having seen, let me likewise have the felicity of seeing and believing. Let me see with mine eyes him whom my soul loveth: let me contemplate

that sacred side, from whence issue so many streams of life for the wretched posterity of Adam: let me admire that sacred body, which is the redemption of a lost world: let me embrace that Jesus, who gave himself for me; and let me behold him, never, never to lose sight of him more." God, of his infinite mercy, grant us all this grace. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE BELIEVER EXALTED TOGETHER WITH JESUS CHRIST.

EPHESIANS ii. 4, 5, 6.

God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

ON studying the history of the lives of those eminent saints of God, whose memory scripture hath transmitted to us, we can with difficulty refrain from deploring, the extreme difference which God has been pleased to make between their privileges and ours. Nay, we are sometimes disposed to flatter ourselves, that if these privileges had been equal, our attainments in virtue might have made a nearer approach to those which have rendered them so respectable in the church. Who would not surmount the difficulties of the most painful career, if he were to enjoy, like Moses, intimate communications with deity; if his eyes were strengthened to behold that awful majesty which God displayed on Mount Sinai? Who could

retain the slightest shadow of incredulity, and who would not be animated to carry the gospel of Christ to the uttermost boundaries of the globe, had he, like Thomas, seen the Lord Jesus after his resurrection; had Jesus Christ said to him, as he said to that apostle: *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing?* John xx. 27. Who could remain still swallowed up of the world, had he seen, with the three disciples, Jesus Christ transfigured on the holy mount; or, had he been, with St. Paul, *caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter?* 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

I have no intention, my brethren, to inquire how far this conception may be illusory, and how far it may be founded in truth: but I wish you attentively to listen to the declaration made by the apostle, in the words of my text. They stand in connection with the last verses of the preceding chapter. St. Paul had advanced not only that God bestows on every believer the same privileges, in substance, which he has vouchsafed to saints of the first order, but that he actually works in them the same wonders which he operated in Jesus Christ, when he restored to him that life, which he laid down for the salvation of mankind, and when, amidst the acclamations of the church triumphant, he received him into paradise.

In the text, our apostle expresses in detail, what he had before proposed in more general terms. He says, that as Jesus Christ, when dead, was restored to life, and raised from the tomb; in like manner we, who *were dead in trespasses and sins*, have been *quickened*, and *raised up*, together with him: and that as Jesus Christ, when raised up from

the dead, was received into heaven, and *seated on his Father's right hand*, in like manner we, after our spiritual resurrection, are admitted to a participation of the same glory. Let us view these two texts in their connection, in order to comprehend the full extent of the apostle's idea: *God*, as we read in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*, has displayed *what is the greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, ... and put all things under his feet.* And, in the words of the text, *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 4, 5, 6.

This proposition, I acknowledge, seems to present something hyperbolical, which it is not easy to reconcile to the strictness of truth: but the difficulties which prevent our comprehending it, do not so much affect the understanding as the heart. It would be much more intelligible, were the love of the creature less predominant in us, and did it less encroach upon the feelings necessary to our perception of a truth, which is almost altogether a truth of feeling. We should, accordingly, have been cautious how we ventured to treat such a subject, at our ordinary seasons of devotion: but, on this day, we believe all things possible to your pious affections. We believe that there can be nothing too tender, nothing too highly superior to sense,

on a solemnity, * when it is to be presumed that, with the apostles, you are *looking steadfastly toward heaven*, after an ascending Saviour; that you are following him with heart and mind, and saying, *Draw us*, Lord, *we will run after thee.*

Before we enter farther into our subject, there are a few advices which we would beg leave to suggest, which may pre-dispose you more clearly to comprehend it.

1. Learn to distinguish the degrees of that disposition of mind which our apostle is describing. He represents the Christian as a man, on whose heart divine grace has made impressions so lively, that he is already *quickened*, already *raised up*, already *made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* This disposition, in whatever it may consist, (which we shall endeavor presently to explain with greater precision) this disposition admits of degrees, I mean to say, that it is possible to be a Christian not only in name and by profession, but a Christian in truth and reality, without having as yet attained it in the most eminent degree. It was necessary to make this observation, by way of prevention of a mental malady, as commonly to be met with in these provinces, as any where else.

Certain circumstances peculiar to yourselves, have constrained your preachers frequently to inculcate the doctrine of the efficacy of divine grace, and of the sentiment which it impresses on the heart. This doctrine has sometimes been misunderstood. Some have considered certain rapturous emotions, excited in the souls of a few highly favored Christians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the essential character of Christianity. It has been erroneously supposed, that to be destitute of these, was to be abandoned of God. Hence have aris-

* Ascension-Day.

en those gloomy and desponding ideas which weak minds form, respecting their own state, especially at those seasons when the Lord's Supper is administered. The books generally read, as a preparation for participating in this solemn service, tells us, that it is at the table of the Lord, in a particular manner, the communicant experiences those communications of the *fulness of joy*, Psa. xvi. 11. that *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. that *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, Phil. iv. 7. that *white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it*, Rev. ii. 17. that anticipated resurrection, that heaven upon earth.

What has been written on this subject is liable to misconception on the part of the reader, as it may have been expressed with too much precision by the composer of such manuals of devotion. Hence it comes to pass, that real Christians, who, notwithstanding the imperfection which cleaves to their best services, have most sincerely devoted the remainder of life to God, are haunted with the apprehension of having communicated unworthily, because they are not conscious of having felt, at the Lord's table, all those effects of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

To Christians of this description, it is that I address my first advise, That they distinguish the degrees of that disposition of mind of which our apostle speaks in the text. A man may be *quickened*, may be *raised up*, may be *made to sit together with Christ Jesus, in heavenly places*, without having all the joy which results from this blessed state. The most infallible mark of our being made partakers in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, is our striving in good earnest, to fulfil the conditions under which that participation is promised us. Let

us fortify ourselves in this disposition of mind, and wait patiently till it shall please God to smooth the difficulties which we encounter in this work, by the pleasure derived from a consciousness of having surmounted them in part, and by the assurance which we have of, at length, surmounting them altogether.

2. The second advice which I presume to suggest, is this, Be on your guard against the love of the marvellous. It is far from being impossible that a man should confound the effects of an imagination heated by its own visionary workings, with those which the Holy Spirit produces, in a soul of which he has taken entire possession. A person animated by the Spirit of God, can easily distinguish his state from that of an enthusiast: but the enthusiast cannot always distinguish his state from that of one animated by the Spirit of God. In general, the road of discussion is incomparably more sure and direct to reach the conscience, and to form a right judgment of it, than the road of feeling. I know that there are certain feelings superior to discussion. I know that the Holy Spirit sometimes diffuses his influence through the soul, in such abundance, with so much fervor, with so much activity, that it is not possible the persons thus highly favored should be ignorant that they are the objects of his tenderest and most particular care. But in order to our being warranted to promise ourselves such communications, the practice of piety must have been carried farther, beyond all comparison, than is commonly the case with most of those who flatter themselves that they have been favored with singular communications of the Spirit. And, once more, the method of discussion is by much the surer, to arrive at a true judgment of the real dispositions of the con-

science, than the test of feeling; in which the temperament, or the imagination, have frequently a larger share than real illumination.

Weigh in the balance the proofs, on which the ideas you have formed of yourselves, are founded. Compare your thoughts, your words, your actions, with the august rules and decisions which God has laid down in his holy word. Regulate your hopes and your fears, according to the characters which you may have discovered in yourselves, after you have studied the subject in this manner. So much for the second advice, which I thought it of importance to suggest.

3. Permit me to subjoin a third. Under pretence of guarding against the reveries of the enthusiast, and against the love of the marvellous, presume not to call in question certain extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit, and neglect not the means of obtaining them. Dispute not with saints of a superior order, what they know by experience to be real. Presume not to establish that measure of grace which you may have received, as the standard for determining that which God is pleased to grant to persons more devoted than you are, to his service. Form not your judgment from the pleasure which you may, at present, derive from religion, of that which you may hereafter enjoy, when religion shall have acquired a more powerful influence over your heart. Be not discouraged by the dryness and discomfort which you may now find in the practice of virtue: in time you will experience it to be a perennial source of delight. This is my third advice.

Having premised these necessary precautions, let us attempt to justify the idea which is here given us of the Christian. Let us place in contrast, the condition in which he was, previous to his

being converted to Christianity, and that which he has attained in virtue of his becoming a Christian. Before he embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, he was *dead in trespasses and sins.* This is a figurative expression, denoting, that sinners are as incapable, of themselves, to shake off the dominion of sin, and the misery inseparable from it, as a dead person is to defend himself against corruption, and to restore his own life. But by becoming a Christian, the believer is, through the mercy of God, not only set free from the dominion of sin, but is put in possession of the highest recompense of reward that justice ever bestowed on the most perfect virtue which ever existed, namely, that of Jesus Christ.

If *never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. never man lived and acted like this man. Accordingly, never was there a man exalted to such a height of felicity and glory. Now, to this very height of felicity and glory the grace of God exalts the Christian. How? In more ways than we are able to indicate, in the time now left us. I satisfy myself with pointing out three of these. The believer is *quickened*, he is *raised up*, he is *made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

I. By the proofs which assure him of the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

II. By the means supplied to satisfy him that he is fulfilling the conditions under which he may promise himself, that he shall become a partaker of that exaltation.

III. By the foretaste which he now enjoys of it on the earth.

I. By the proofs which assure him of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. It is not necessary here to detail them in their full extent. This has been already done on former occasions. * We have shewn you, that, in support of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (and the same reasonings apply, with nearly the same force, to all the particulars of his exaltation) we have presumptions, proofs, demonstrations. But, as I have just said, it is not necessary here to make a minute recapitulation.

But I would wish to unfold, under this head, the true causes which prevent those proofs, irresistible as they are, from producing, on the mind of the greater part of Christians, that lively impression which would justify the hyperbolical language employed by our apostle, That Christians have a conviction as complete of the truth of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, as if they had been *quickened*, as if they had been *raised up*, as if they were *made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* The following are the principal causes of this sore evil.

1. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, do not produce impressions so lively as they ought, from the abuse of a distinction between *mathematical evidence*, and *moral evidence.* A scruple in point of precision, has given rise to this distinction. We call that *mathematical evidence*, which is founded on the clear idea of a subject. I have a clear idea of two even numbers. This proposition, From the addition of two even numbers there results an even number, is founded upon an evidence

* Consult the Sermon on *Christ's Resurrection*, the eighth of Vol. II. of Mr. Robinson's selection, and Sermon V. of this volume.

which arises from the clear idea of that number. That is called *moral evidence*, which is founded on testimony worthy of credit. I have, naturally, no idea of the city of Constantinople. I can decide the question of its existence, only upon testimony of a certain kind. This distinction is undoubtedly a real one. But it is making a strange abuse of it to pretend, that what is founded on the *evidence* denominated *moral*, is not so certain as that which is founded on what is denominated *mathematical evidence*. Two reasons persuade me of this, which I submit to your consideration.

(i) It involves no less contradiction, that a complex concurrence of circumstances should unite with respect to a false testimony, than that there should be a falsehood in consequence deduced immediately from the nature of a subject. It involves no less contradiction to affirm, that all the witnesses, who assure me there is a city called Constantinople, have agreed to impose upon me, than it involves a contradiction to allege, that this proposition is illusory, From the addition of two even numbers there results an even number.

(ii) The second reason is still more forcible, It is taken from the nature of God himself. We have *mathematical evidence* for this, That God cannot take pleasure in leading men into error. But God would take pleasure in leading men into error, if after having made the truth of their religion to rest on the existence of certain facts, which are susceptible only of proofs of fact, he had bestowed, on imaginary facts, the same characters of truth which he has impressed on such as are real. The truth of our religion is founded on these facts: Jesus Christ is risen, and has ascended into heaven: but this exaltation is supported by all the evidence of which facts are susceptible. If the exaltation of

Jesus Christ is merely imaginary, God has permitted imaginary facts to assume all the evidence of real facts. God, therefore, betrays men into error. But we have *mathematical evidence*, that it is impossible for God to betray men into error. It is clear, therefore, as I think, that *moral evidence*, when carried to a certain degree, ought to be ranked in the same class with *mathematical evidence*. The truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, therefore, will not produce the lively impressions which we have mentioned, so long as men abuse, which is the case with certain philosophers, the distinction between *moral evidence* and *mathematical evidence*.

2. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ produce not impressions so lively as they ought, because the mind is under the influence of a prejudice, unworthy of a real philosopher, namely, that *moral evidence* changes its nature, according to the nature of the things to which it is applied. What is demonstration of a fact, which is in the sphere of natural things, seems to cease to be such, respecting facts of a supernatural kind. A certain species of proof will be sufficient to demonstrate that Cæsar existed: and that same species of proof shall be deemed insufficient to ascertain that Moses existed. What a strange disposition of mind! The truth of a fact, which does not in itself imply a contradiction, depends not on the nature of that fact, but on the proofs by which it is supported.

I am ready to admit, that stronger proof will be expected, in order to produce belief of extraordinary events, than is necessary to establish the truth of what happens every day. To produce belief, for instance, that a great scholar is humble, calls for stronger proof than that he is vain: to produce belief, that a friend is as faithful in adversity as he

was in prosperity, than that he is less so. But what is evidence with respect to ordinary facts, is likewise so with respect to such as are extraordinary. What is evidence with respect to natural things, is likewise so with respect to such as are supernatural. Nothing more unreasonable can be conceived than the disposition expressed by the apostle Thomas. All the members of the apostolic college, unanimously assure him that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. They adduce this proof of it, that they have beheld him with their own eyes. No, says he, *except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*, John xx. 25. Wherefore does that which would have been evidence to him on another occasion, cease to be so on this? It is because the matter in question is something supernatural. But the question is not, whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ be within the sphere of natural things, but whether it is founded on proofs sufficient to constitute satisfying evidence.

3. The proofs of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because the necessary discrimination has not been employed in the selection of those proofs, on which some have pretended to establish it. This remark has a reference to certain of the learned, who imagined that they were rendering essential service to the church, when they multiplied proofs, with an indiscreet zeal, and produced every thing which they deemed favorable to the Christian religion. Fraud, fair-dealing, all, all appeared equal in their eyes, provided it could contribute to this end. Wretched method! Why was it not confined to the propagators of falsehood; and why has it been so frequently adopted by the partizans

of truth! I pretend not to determine whether there be much solidity in the idea of some who have alleged, that the reason why Jesus Christ so strictly prohibited the demons to publish that he was the Messiah, was an apprehension that a testimony borne to his mission by lying spirits, might render the truth of it suspected. But I am well assured, that if any thing could have excited a suspicion in my mind unfavorable to the exaltation of the Son of God, it would have been that medley of proofs, solid and without foundation, which we find in the writings of certain ancient doctors of the church on this subject. No one will ever attain to a complete conviction of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, so long as he neglects to discriminate the proofs on which the truth of it rests. The discovery of the slightest falsehood in those which we had believed to be true, will go far toward invalidating the proof of those which we had good reason to believe founded in truth.

4. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because we are too deeply affected by our inability to resolve certain questions, which the enemies of religion are accustomed to put, on some circumstances relative to that event. The evangelists have recorded all those which are necessary to convince us of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their silence respecting circumstances of another kind, and our inability to satisfy the demands of those who insist upon them, present nothing to excite suspicion against the fidelity of their narration. They do not tell us, for example, what Jesus Christ did immediately after his resurrection, and before his appearing to the devout women, and to the apostles. They do not tell us what he did during the forty days which he passed

upon the earth before his ascension. They do not tell us to whom those dead persons appeared, who came into the holy city to attest his resurrection, nor what became of them after their apparition. The Holy Spirit, perhaps, was not pleased to reveal such things to those inspired men. Perhaps they did not think proper to declare them, though they might have had perfect information on the subject. But is there any thing in this to invalidate the proofs on which the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is founded? Is there any one ancient history, I say any one without exception, that goes into a certain detail of circumstances? Are we acquainted with all the circumstances of the life of Alexander, or of Darius? Does our ignorance respecting such and such particulars, suggest a doubt whether those persons ever existed? Do we know all the circumstances attending the battle of Gaunæ, and that of Pharsalia. Does our ignorance of these, suggest a doubt whether such battles were actually fought? Is it fair to prescribe, to the sacred authors, rules which we readily dispense with in the case of profane authors?

5. The proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because we suffer ourselves to be intimidated more than we ought, by the comparison instituted between them and certain popular rumors, which have no better support than the caprice of the persons who propagate them. Unbelievers tell us that the multitude is credulous, that it is ever disposed to be practised upon by imposture, from the idea of the marvellous. They accumulate all those noted instances of credulity which ancient and modern history abundantly supply; for it costs very little trouble, indeed, to make the collection ample. They avail

themselves of those instances to invalidate the argument which we adduce from the unanimity of that testimony which evinces the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But let them shew us, among what they call *popular rumors*, let them shew us, among these, any thing of the same kind with those which we have produced; and then we shall feel ourselves called upon to defend, in another way, the doctrine in question. But under the pretext that mankind is credulous, obstinately to resist the force of proofs which have been admitted by judges the most rigid and acute, is wilfully to shut the eyes against the truth.

6. Finally, the proofs of the truth of the exaltation of our blessed Lord and Saviour, produce not impressions sufficiently lively, because they are not sufficiently known. The preceding particulars chiefly relate to the learned, and the philosophic part of mankind, of whom the number, undoubtedly, is on comparison very inconsiderable. This relates to the multitude, of which the far greater part of our audiences is composed. I am well aware that those proofs have been carried farther in the present age, than ever had been done, perhaps, since the days of the apostles. I have, oftener than once, adored the conduct of divine Providence, in that the objections of unbelievers, of which it may likewise be affirmed, that they have been carried farther in the present age, than they have been since the times of the earliest antagonists of the Christian religion. I have oftener than once, I say, adored the conduct of divine Providence, in that those objections have furnished occasion to scrutinize the proofs of the facts, on which the truth of Christianity rests.

In proportion as events are more remote, the more difficult it becomes to ascertain them. If

the spirit of superstition and blind credulity had continued to be the reigning folly of mankind, men would have neglected to study the proofs of the facts of which I have been speaking, and we should have had, in later ages, much greater trouble in demonstrating the truth of them. But infidelity is the reigning folly of the age in which we live, and has, as it were, succeeded the spirit of superstition and blind credulity, the reigning folly of ages past. Now Providence has so ordered the course of things, that this very infidelity should prove the occasion of placing, in their clearest point of light, those illustrious proofs which we have of the facts whereon the Christian religion is founded. But though they have been stated with so much clearness and precision, it is undoubtedly certain that they are not, hitherto, sufficiently known by the generality of professing Christians.

Would you be thoroughly convinced of the exaltation of the Saviour of mankind, devote to the study, which I am recommending, a part, I do not say only of that time which you so liberally bestow on the world and its pleasures, but a part of even that which you have thrown away upon useless controversies, on the speculative questions, and the bold researches, with which most books, on the subject of religion, are filled. Let the mind be deeply impressed with that series of presumptions, of arguments, of demonstrations, of which the resurrection, and the other particulars of the exaltation of the Son of God are susceptible. Do all diligence to discern the whole evidence of those facts, without which, to use the apostle's expression, *your faith is vain, and our preaching also is vain*, 1 Cor. xv. 14. Then you will perceive, that the truth of the exaltation of the Saviour is founded upon proofs, which it is impossible for any

reasonable man to resist. You will be, in some measure, as much convinced that he is raised up from the dead, and ascended into heaven, as if you had seen him, with your own eyes, bursting asunder the bars of the grave, and assuming his seat at the right hand of the Father: you will be, in this first sense, *quickened together with Christ*, and *raised up*, and *made to sit together in heavenly places with him.*

SERMON VI.

PART II.

THE CHRISTIAN A PARTAKER IN THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

EPHESIANS ii. 4, 5, 6.

God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

HAVING given a few preliminary advices relative to my subject, I went on to justify the accuracy of the apostle's idea, by shewing, that the Christian is *quickened, raised up, seated in heavenly places, together with Christ.*

I. By the reasons which persuade him of the certainty of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. I now proceed to justify St. Paul's idea, by shewing:

II. The Christian's participation in the glory of Jesus Christ, by the means with which he is fur-

nished of knowing himself, and of attaining assurance that he is fulfilling the conditions under which he is enabled to promise himself an interest in that exaltation. I do not mean to insinuate that this knowledge is of easy attainment. I maintain, on the contrary, that it is one of the most difficult which can be proposed to a man. And without entering here into a detail of the reasons which evince the difficulty of it, it is sufficient for me to adduce a single one; it is the smallness of the number of those who know themselves. The judgments which men form of their own character, is an inexhaustible source of ridicule. The world is crowded with people totally blind, especially where they themselves are concerned.

What illusion do they practise upon themselves, with respect to the body! How many are there whom nature has sadly degraded in point of person: forms which you would say were only blocked out, and of which, if I may use the expression, God seems only to have erected the first scaffoldings, conceive of themselves ideas directly opposite to the truth. Talk of the corporeal qualities of such and such persons: they will be among the first to make them an object of derision, and discover this to be too slim, that to be too gross; falling foul of the whole human race, and shewing tenderness to no one but themselves. If we are thus subject to blindness, where things sensible, palpable, are concerned, how much greater must be the danger where matters of a very different complexion address themselves to our self-love?

We practise illusion upon ourselves, on the score of our understanding. How many ignorant, dull, stupid people, betray a conceit that they are intelligent philosophers, profound politicians; that they possess a judgment accurate, enlightened, uncom-

mon; and are so powerfully prepossessed with the belief of this, that the combined universe could not drive them out of it. Hence it comes to pass, that they are for ever taking the lead in society, exacting attention, courting admiration, pronouncing, deciding peremptorily, and seeming to say at every turn, Am not I a most extraordinary personage? But you have never had the advantage of a course of education, or of regular study. No matter; talents supply every deficiency. But no one presents incense to you, yourself only excepted. Still it signifies nothing: it is the wretched taste of the present age. But you are actually a laughing-stock to mankind. No matter still; it has always been the lot of great men to be the object of envy and calumny.

We practise illusion upon ourselves in favor of our heart. Should you chance to be in the circle of slanderers, and bear your testimony against slander, the whole company will instantly take your side. The most criminal will endeavor to pass for the most innocent. They will tell you that it is the most odious, abominable, execrable of vices. They will tell you that the severest punishments ought to be adjudged againt the offender; that he ought to be excluded from all human society. And the very persons who are themselves actuated by this detestable poison, who are themselves diffusing the baleful poison of their malignity, apprehend not that they are, in the slightest degree, chargeable with such a vice. Have you no knowledge, my brethren, of such a portrait? Have I been depicting to you manners which have no existence in real life? If there be any among you incapable of discovering himself under such similitudes as these, it is a demonstration of what I

wished to prove, that it is a very difficult thing for a man to know himself.

But though this knowledge be extremely difficult, it is by no means of impossible attainment. The believer employs two methods, principally, to arrive at it. 1. He studies his own heart. 2. He shrinks not from the inspection of the eyes of another.

1. First, the believer studies his own heart. Let it not appear matter of astonishment that the generality of mankind are so little acquainted with themselves. They are almost always from home: external objects engross all the powers of their mind; they never dive to the bottom of their own conscience. Does it deserve the name of searching the heart, if a man employs a rapid and superficial self-examination, by reading a few books of preparation, on the eve of a communion solemnity: if he devote a few moments attention to the maxims of a preacher, much more with a design to apply them to others, than to make them a test of his own conduct? How is it possible, by means of an examination so cursory, to attain a knowledge which costs the most eminent saints so much application?

A real Christian studies himself in a very different manner. With the torch of the gospel in his hand, he searches into the most secret recesses of conscience. He traces his actions up to their real principles. When he has performed an act of virtue, he scrupulously examines whether he had been actuated by some merely human respect, or whether it proceeded from a sacred regard to the law of God. When he unhappily is overtaken, and falls into sin, he carefully examines whether he was betrayed into it by surprise, or whether, from the prevalence of corruption in his heart, and from

the love of the world still exercising dominion over him. When he abstains from certain vices, he examines whether it proceeded from real self-government, or merely from want of means and opportunity; and he asks himself this question, What would I have done, had I been placed in such and such circumstances? Would I have preserved my innocence with Joseph, or lost it as David did? Would I, with Peter, have denied Jesus Christ, or have endured martyrdom in his cause, like Stephen?

2. The second method which the believer employs to arrive at the knowledge of his own heart, is to permit others to unveil it to his eyes: this is done particularly, either by the public instructions of the faithful ministers of the gospel, or by the private admonitions of a judicious and sincere friend: two articles very much calculated to explain to us the reasons why most men attain such an imperfect knowledge of themselves.

It is with difficulty we can digest those addresses from the pulpit, in which the preacher ventures to go into certain details, without which it is impossible for us to acquire self-knowledge. We are fond of dwelling on generals. Our own portrait excites disgust, when the resemblance is too exact. It is a circumstance well worthy of being remarked, that what we admire the most in the sermons of the dead, is the very thing which gives most offence in the sermons of the living. When we read, in discourses pronounced several ages ago, those bold strictures in which the preachers unmasked the hypocrites of their times, reproved the vices of the great as freely as those of the little, attacked adultery, extortion, a tyrannical spirit, in the very presence of the offenders, we are ready to exclaim, What zeal! What courage! What firmness! But

when a preacher of our own days presumes to form himself after such excellent models; when he would copy the example of Elijah, who said to Ahab, *I have not troubled Israel: but thou and thy father's house*, 1 Kings xviii 18. when he would follow the example of Nathan, who said to David, *Thou art the man*, 2 Sam. xii. 7: or that of John Baptist, who said to Herod, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*, Mark vi. 18: then the cry is, What audacity! What presumption! It would be improper, my brethren, to extend any farther my remarks on this subject at present; but I may be permitted, at least, to borrow the words of Jesus Christ, addressed to his disciples; *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*, John xvi. 12.

If we are unable to digest public discourses of the description which we have been giving, much less are we disposed to bear with the private admonitions of a judicious and sincere friend, who is so faithful as to unveil to us our own heart. What a treasure is a friend, who keeps constantly in view, I do not say our honor only, our reputation, but more especially our duty, our conscience, our salvation! What a treasure is a man, who employs the influence which he may have over us, only for the purpose of undeceiving us when we are in an error; of bringing us back when we are gone astray; of assisting us to unravel and detect the pretences which the deceitfulness of the human heart uses to justify to itself its wanderings and weaknesses! What a treasure is a man, who has the honesty to say to us, according as circumstances may require: "Here it was your want of experience that misled you: there, it was the prejudice of a faulty education: on that occasion, you was betrayed, through the seduction of those

flatterers, in whose society you take so much delight: on this, it was the too favorable opinion which you had formed of yourselves, which would persuade you that you are ever sincere in your conversation; ever upright in your intentions; ever steady in your friendships!"

Nevertheless, we usually look upon this precious treasure not only with disdain, but even with horror. It is sufficient to make us regard a man with an eye of suspicion, that he has discovered our weak side. It is sufficient for him to undertake to paint us in our true colors, to be perfectly odious to us. A real Christian employs all the means with which he is furnished, to unveil his own heart to himself. Having acquired this important knowledge, he seriously and resolutely sets about personal reformation, and he makes progress in it. He examines this new state into which divine grace has introduced him; and finding within himself the characters of Christianity, he lays hold of its promises. He becomes assured of his being in the class of those to whom they are made. And what is it to possess such assurance? It is to have an anticipated possession of all the blessings which are the object of it. It is to be already *quickened*, already *raised up*, already *made to sit in heavenly places together with Jesus Christ*.

III. Finally, the believer is *quickened*, he is *raised up*, he is *made to sit together in heavenly places*, by means of the foretastes which he enjoys of his participation in the exaltation of the Saviour of the world. Should any one accuse me, of myself running, under this head, upon that rock of the marvellous, against which I cautioned my hearers, under a preceding branch of my discourse, I would request his attention to the following series

of propositions, which I barely indicate in so many words.

1st Proposition. God possesses a sovereign empire over all the perceptions of our souls; he is able to excite in them such as he pleases, either with the concurrence of external objects, or without that concurrence.

2d Proposition. In the order of nature, God has united the compendious road of sensation to the more circuitous one of reasoning, for the preservation of our body. What is noxious to the body, makes itself known to us, not only by a process of reasoning, but by certain disagreeable sensations, which warn us to keep at a distance from it. Whatever contributes to its preservation, makes itself known by pleasurable sensations, and thereby engages us to make use of it.

3d Proposition. It by no means involves a contradiction, to say, that if it was the will of God, in the order of nature, that the compendious road of sensation should supply the more circuitous one of reasoning, he may sometimes be pleased to conform to the same economy, in the order of grace.

4th Proposition. We are assured not only by reason, that God may adopt this mode of proceeding, but scripture and experience assure us, that he actually does so, in the case of certain Christians of a superior order.

I compare those sentiments of grace, to the movements by which the prophets were animated, and which permitted them not the power of doubting whether or not it was the effect of the presence of God in their soul; movements, which produced conviction that God intended to make use of their ministry, and constrained them, in many cases, to act in contradiction to their own inclinations. Never was mission more glorious than that of Je-

remiah. Never was mission more difficult and more burthensome. He was called to open his mouth in maledictions, levelled against his fellow citizens, and to be himself exposed as a butt to the execrations of that people. Overwhelmed under the pressure of a ministry so distressful, he exclaims: *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth,* chap. xv. 10. He does more. He forms the resolution of renouncing a ministry which has become the bitterness of his life: *The word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily; then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name,* chap. xx. 8, 9. But God lays hold of him, by invisible bonds, and which he finds it impossible to shake off: *the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily; then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay,* ver. 9. *O Lord, thou hast deceived* (enticed) *me, and I was deceived:* (enticed) *thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed,* ver. 7.

I am persuaded that many among you have experienced, in your vocation, something similar to what the prophet experienced in his. I am persuaded that many of you have been attracted by those irresistible bands, and have felt that sacred flame kindled in your soul which the Holy Spirit communicates to the regenerated, and which put these words in the mouths of the disciples, who were travelling to Emmaus: *Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32.

Now, if you call upon me to go into a more particular detail on this subject, I will say to you, that however mysterious this operation of the grace of God may be; whatever difficulty may appear in exactly ascertaining the time of its communication, it is imparted to believers in five situations chiefly. 1. When shutting the door of his closet, and excluding the world from his heart, the Christian enjoys communion with deity. 2. When Providence calls him to undergo some severe trial. 3. When he has been enabled to make some noble and generous sacrifice. 4. When celebrating the sacred mysteries of redeeming love. 5. Finally, in the hour of conflict with the king of terrors.

1. When shutting the door of his closet, and excluding the world from his heart, he is admitted to communion and fellowship with deity, in retirement and silence. There it is that a commerce is instituted, the charms of which I should to no purpose undertake to display, unless they were known to you by experience. There it is that the believer compensates to himself the time of which he has been constrained to defraud his God; and there it is, that God compensates to the believer, the delights of which the commerce of the world has deprived him. There it is that the believer pours out into the bosom of his Father and his God, the sorrow excited by the recollection of his offences, and that he sheds the tears of a repentance which love has enkindled, and expresses in terms such as these:

"My God, I know that love is thy predominant character, and that it cannot be thy will I should perish; but I am ashamed of my own weaknesses; I am ashamed of the little progress I have made in religion, since the time thou hast been pleased to

grant me a revelation of it. I am ashamed to reflect that such an accumulation of benefits as thou hast conferred upon me, should have still produced so slight an impression upon my heart."

And there it is that God wipes the tear from the believer's eye, and heals up the wounds of the penitent, saying unto him, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*, Isa xliii, 25. There it is that the believer avails himself of the tender access which God condescends to grant at those precious moments, and that conversing with him, *as a man speaking unto his friend*, Ex. xxxiii. 11. he asks him to bestow communications more endearing, more intimate: "*Lord, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*, ver. 18. Lord, scatter that darkness which still veils thy perfections from my view: Lord, dispel those clouds which still intervene between me and the light of thy countenance." There it is that God takes pleasure to gratify desire so nobly directed: "Poor mortals, how unrefined, how debased is your taste! How much are you to be pitied, with that relish for the meagre delights of this world!" Is there any one that can stand a comparison with that which the believer enjoys in such blessed intercourse as this?

2. When Providence calls him to encounter some severe trial. I speak not here of trials to which appetite prompts a man to expose himself, under the specious pretext of promising himself the glory of a triumph; but, in reality, from the fatal charm which betrays him into defeat. We have no encouragement to expect divine support to resist and overcome temptation, when we rashly throw ourselves in the way of it: *He that loveth danger*, saith the wise man, *shall perish therein.* I speak of those trials which the believer is called

to encounter, either from some supernatural interposition, or simply from the duty imposed by his Christian vocation. How often do they appear to him so rude, as to awaken despair of overcoming? How often, when abandoned for a moment to his frailty, he says within himself: "No, I shall never have the fortitude to bear up under that painful conflict: no, it will be impossible for me to survive the loss of that child, far dearer to me than life itself: no, I shall never be able to fulfil the duties of the station to which Providence is calling me: How can I give my heart to what I hate, and tear it away from what I love?" Christian, be of good courage. See that thy resolution be upright and sincere, *to him that believeth all things are possible*, Mark ix. 23.

There are resources of grace with which thou art yet unacquainted; but which thou shalt know by experience, if thou prayest for them, and makest it thy unremitting and sincere endeavor to walk worthy of such exalted expectations. God himself will descend into thy soul with rays of light, with fresh supplies of strength, with impressions so lively of the promised recompense of reward, that thou shalt not feel the pains of conflict, and be sensible only to the pleasure of victory, whilst thou art yet in the hottest of the battle.

3. I said that those transporting foretastes are communicated to the believer, after he has been enabled to offer up some noble and generous sacrifice. I can conceive no transports once to be compared with those which Abraham felt, on his descent from Mount Moriah. What conflicts must he have undergone from the awful moment that God demanded his Isaac! What a dreadful portion of time, I was going to say, what an eternity, was the three days which passed between his de-

parture from his habitation, and his arrival at the place where this tremendous sacrifice was to be offered up! What emotions must that question of Isaac have excited in a father's bosom; *behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* Gen. xxii. 7. Abraham comes off victorious in all these combats: Abraham binds his son with cords; he stretches him out on the wooden pile; he lifts up his hand to pierce the bosom of this innocent victim. God arrests his uplifted arm. Abraham has done his duty: he carries back his own son with him: What a transport of delight!

But this is not all. Will God be outdone in generosity by Abraham? He crowns the obedience of his servant; he accumulates upon him new marks of favor; he promises himself to immolate his own Son for the man, who could summon up the resolution to devote his son at God's command. This is, according to St. Paul, the sense of those mysterious words: *But myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; . . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,* Gen. xxii 16, 17, 18. Gal. iii. 8. Christians, true posterity of the father of believers, you have a reward similar to his.

4. While he is partaking in the sacred mysteries of redeeming love, likewise, the believer feels himself *quickened, raised up, seated together with Jesus Christ.* I cannot refrain, however, from here deploring the superstition of certain Christians, which mingles with this part of our religious worship, and from repeating one of the advices which

I suggested at the opening of this discourse. Make not the success of your communion to depend on certain emotions, in which mechanism has much more to do than piety has. It but too frequently happens, that a man shall apprehend he has communicated worthily or unworthily, in proportion as he has carried to a less or greater length the art of moving the senses, and of heating the imagination, while he partakes of the Lord's Supper. The touch-stone by which we ought to judge, whether we brought, to the Lord's table, the dispositions which he requires, is the sincerity with which we have renewed our baptismal engagements, and the exertions which we shall afterwards make punctually to fulfil them.

It is true, nevertheless, that a participation of the Sacrament of the Supper, is one of the situations, in which a believer most frequently experiences those gracious operations, of which our apostle is speaking in his text. A soul, whose undivided attention the Holy Spirit fixes on the mystery of the cross; and on whom he is pleased to impress, in a lively manner, the great events which the symbolical representation in the Eucharist retraces on the heart; a soul, which, through grace, loses itself in the abyss of that love which God has manifested toward us in Jesus Christ: a soul, which has learned to infer, from what God has already done, what is still farther to be expected from him: a soul, which feels, and, if I may use the expression, which relishes the conclusiveness of this reasoning, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. Is not a soul in such a state, already *quickened*, already *raised up*, already *seated in heavenly places, together with Christ Jesus?*

5. But it is particularly, when the believer is grappling with the king of terrors, that he experiences those communications of divine grace, which transport him into another world, and which verify, in the most sublime of all senses, the idea which the apostle conveys to us of it, in the words of the text. Witness that patience and submission under sufferings the most acute, and that entire acquiescence in the sovereign will of God: *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*, Psa. xxxix 9. Witness that supernatural detachment from the world, which enables him to resign, without murmuring and without reserve, all that he was most tenderly united to: *henceforth know I no man after the flesh*, 2 Cor. v. 16. I have no connection now, save with that *Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*, Eph. iii. 15. Witness that immoveable hope, in the midst of universal desertion: *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*, Job. xiii. 15. *yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*, Psa. xxiii. 4. Witness that faith, which pierces through the clouds, which the devil, and hell, and the world spread around his bed of languishing: *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another*, Job. xix. 25, 26, 27. Witness that holy impatience, with which he looks forward to the moment of his dismission: *I have waited for thy salvation*,

O God, Gen. xlix. 18. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. Witness those songs of triumph, amidst the very sharpest of the conflict: *Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*, Psa. cxlix. 1.

Witness, once more, those tender, those instructive, those edifying conversations, which take place between the dying Christian and his pastor. The pastor addresses, to the dying person, these words on the part of God: *Seek my face;* and the dying believer replies: *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, Psa. xxvii. 8. The pastor says: *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon thee*, 1 John iii. 1. and the dying person replies; *the love of God is shed abroad in my heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto me*, Rom. v. 5. The pastor says: *Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God:* the dying person replies; *I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?* Psa. xlii 2. The pastor says: *Run with patience the race that is set before thee, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith*, Heb. xii. 1, 2. The dying believer replies; *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God*, Acts vii. 56.

Such are the wonders which the grace of God displays, in favor of those who are in earnest to obtain it, and give themselves up to its direction. And such are the treasures, unhappy worldlings,

which you are sacrificing to a transient world, and its lying vanities. Such is the felicity which you experience, which you have already experienced in part, happy, happy Christians, whose condition is so far preferable to that of all the rest of mankind.

What now remains for me to do, after having employed my feeble efforts to draw you to God, by attractions so powerful: what remains, but to address my most fervent prayers to him, and to entreat that he would be pleased to make known those pure and exalted delights, to those who are, as yet, utter strangers to them; and that he may powerfully confirm, even unto the end, those to whom he has already graciously communicated them. With this we shall conclude the solemn business of a day of sacred rest. We are going, once more, to lift up to heaven, in your behalf, hands purified in the blood of the Redeemer of mankind. Come, my beloved brethren, support these hands, should they wax heavy: perform for us the service which Aaron and Hur rendered to Moses, as we are attempting to render the service of a Moses unto you. Assist us in moving the bowels of the God of mercy. And graciously vouchsafe, blessed Jesus, who, on the memorable day, of which we are now celebrating the anniversary, wert *made higher than the heavens; set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;* and who presentest unto God, in *a golden censer, the prayers of all saints:* Vouchsafe, blessed Jesus, to give energy to those which we are about to put up, and support them by thy all-powerful intercession. Amen.

N. B. The reader may here peruse the next sermon in the series, that on *The Effusion of the Holy Spirit,* which is the ninth of Vol. II. of Mr. Robinson's selection.

SERMON VII.

FOR A COMMUNION SABBATH.

MALACHI i. 6, 7.

A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer up polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

THOUGH the spectacle, which the solemnity of this day calls to our recollection, did not directly interest ourselves, it would, nevertheless, be altogether worthy, separately considered, of detaining our eyes, and of fixing our attention. Men have sometimes appeared, who finding their last moments approaching, collected their family, summoned up their remaining strength, expressed a wish, in a repast of love and benevolence, to take a last, a long farewell of the persons who were most dear to them, and to break asunder, by that concluding act of social attachment, all the remains of that human affection which tied them down to the world.

What an object, my brethren, what a heart-affecting object, does that man present, who beholding himself on the point of being removed from all those to whom he was most tenderly united, desires to see them all assembled together, for the last time, and when assembled, addresses in terms such as these. "It was to you, whose much-loved society constituted the joy of my life, it was to you I took delight in disclosing the most secret emotions of my soul; and if it were still possible for any thing to call me back, now that my God is calling me away, it would be the inclination I feel, to prolong the happy days which we have passed together. But though the bands which unite us are close and endeared, they must not be everlasting. Is was in the order of human things, either that you should be called to close my eyes, or that I should be called to close yours. Providence is now declaring the supreme command, that I should travel, before you, *the way of all the earth:* it was my wish, before I undergo the irreversible decree, once more to behold the persons whom I have ever borne on my heart, to call to remembrance the sweet counsel which we have taken together, the connections which we have formed: and thus too it is, that I would take leave of the world. After having given way, for a moment, to the expansions of my love for you, I rise above all the objects of sense; I am swallowed up of the thoughts which ought to employ the soul of a dying person, and I hasten to submit to the will of the sovereign disposer of life and death."

Jesus Christ, in the institution of this holy ordinance, is doing somewhat similar to the representation now given. His disciples were, undoubtedly, his most powerful attachment to the earth. The kind of death which he was about to suffer,

demanded the undivided attention of his mind; but before he plunges into that vast ocean of thought, which was to carry him through the sharp conflicts prepared for him, he wishes to behold again, at his table, those tender objects of his affection: *With desire*, says he to them, *I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer*, Luke xxii. 15. Had I not good reasons for expressing myself as I did? Though this spectacle did not directly interest ourselves, it would be highly worthy, considered in itself, of detaining our eyes, and of fixing our attention.

But what closeness of attention, what concentration of thought does it not require of us, if we consider it in the great and comprehensive views, which animated the Saviour of the world, when he instituted the sacrament of the supper! Behold him prepared, that divine Saviour, to finish the great work which heaven has given him to do. He comes to subsitute himself in the room of those victims, whose blood too worthless could do nothing for the purification of guilty man. He comes to fulfil that mysterious prediction: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: . . . . Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart*, Psa. xl. 6—8. He comes to deliver up himself to that death, the very approaches of which inspire the soul with horror, and constrain him to cry out: *Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say?* John xii. 27. *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, Matt. xxvi. 38.

What shall he do to support himself in the prospect of such tremendous arrangements? What buckler shall he oppose to those envenomed arrows with which he is going to be transfixed? Love,

my brethren, formed the generous design of the sacrifice which he is ready to offer up; and love will carry him through the arduous undertaking. He says to himself, That the memory of this death which he is going to endure, shall be perpetuated in the churches, even unto the end of the world; that, even to the end of the world, he shall be the refuge of poor perishing sinners. He says to himself, That through the whole world of believers, whom the preaching of the gospel is going to subdue to his love and obedience, this death shall be celebrated. He himself institutes the memorial of it, and taking that bread and that wine, the august symbols of his body broken, and of his blood shed, he gives them to his disciples: he says to them, and, in their person, to all those who shall believe in him, through their word: *Take, eat, this is my body; this is my blood of the New Testament, drink ye all of it*, Matt. xxvi. 26, 28. *This do in remembrance of me; For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*, 1 Cor. xi. 24, 26.

O shame to human nature! O the weakness, shall I call it? or the hardness of the human heart! And must it needs be; must the sweet composure of this holy exercise, be this day marred, by the cruel apprehension, that some among you may be in danger of profaning it, while they celebrate it? Must it be, that in inviting you to that sacred table, we should be checked by the humiliating reflection, that some new Judas may be coming there to receive the sentence of his condemnation? It is in the view of doing our utmost, to prevent the commission of a crime so foul, and a calamity so dreadful, that we wish, previously to our distributing unto you the bread and the wine which sovereign wisdom has prepared for you, to engage

you in deep and serious reflection on the words which have been read. You will be abundantly sensible how well they are adapted to my purpose, when you shall have placed yourselves, in thought, in the circumstances wherein the Jews were placed at the time they were addressed to them. With this I open my subject.

The prophet Malachi, whose voice God is here employing on a message to his people, lived a few years after the return from the captivity. He succeeded Haggai and Zechariah. These two prophets had been raised up, chiefly for the purpose of stimulating the Jews to undertake the rebuilding of the temple. Malachi was specially destined, to urge them to render unto God, in that magnificent edifice, a worship suitable to the majesty of him to whose service it was consecrated. The same difficulties, which the two first of those holy men had to encounter in the discharge of their ministry, he encountered in the exercise of his. What desire more ardent could animate men, who had lived threescore and ten years without a temple, without altars, without sacrifices, without a public worship, than that of beholding in the midst of them, those gracious signs of the divine presence? This was, however, by no means the object of general ambition and pursuit. They looked to the rearing and embellishing of their own houses, and left to God the care of building that which belonged to him.

We find traces of this shameful history, in the prophecies of the two first whom we have named, particularly in those of Haggai. There we have displayed the excuses made by that wretched people, to serve as a color to their criminal negligence: *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time*

that the Lord's house should be built, chap. i. 2. We have a censure of this spirit and conduct, proportioned to their enormity, in ver. 4. *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?* But, what is still more awful, we behold the tremendous judgments, by which God avenged himself of guilt so atrocious, in ver. 9, 10, 11. *Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.*

How awfully respectable is a preacher, my brethren, when the indignation of heaven seconds his voice! When the pestilence, mortality, famine, add weight to the threatenings which he denounced! Haggai, supported by this all-powerful aid, at length obtained the object of his ministry. The Jews did that from constraint which they ought to have done from a principle of piety and zeal: you might now see them laboring with emulous fevor, to raise the august edifice, and the temple arose out of its ruins.

But scarcely was the house of the Lord rebuilt, when they profaned the sanctity of the place, and violated the laws which were there to be observed. The observation of those laws was burthensome. It required not only great mental application, but was likewise attended with very considerable expense. The avarice of their sordid spirits made them

consider every thing which they dedicated to such purposes, as next to lost. They durst not, at the same time, venture entirely to shake off the yoke of religion. They did what men generally do, when the laws of God clash with their inclinations: they neither yielded complete submission, nor dared to avow open rebellion. They attempted to reconcile the dictates of their own passions with the commands of heaven. To comply with the commands of heaven, they presented offerings; but to gratify the cravings of passion, they presented offerings of little value.

This idea of the circumstances, in which the Jews were, at the time when our prophet flourished, is one of the best keys for disclosing the real sense of the words of the text. If it unfolds not to us the whole extent of its signification, it furnishes at least a good general explication. Malachi severely censures the priests of his day, that called, as they were, to maintain good order in the church, they calmly overlooked, or avowedly countenanced the open violation of it. He reproaches them for this misconduct, by the example of what a son owes to his father, and a servant to his master. He employs this image, because the priests were, in an appropriate sense, considered as belonging unto God; in conformity to what God himself says in chap. viii. of the book of Numbers: *Thou shalt separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine: . . . . for they are wholly given unto me, from among the children of Israel . . . . instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me: . . . . on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them for myself.* It is to you, O ye priests, says he to them, that I address myself: *A son honoreth his father,*

and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that d spise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

If any difficulty still remain, respecting the general sense of the passage, it can be of no considerable importance, as it prevents not our discerning the principal aim and design of the Holy Spirit. It is not perhaps easy, I admit, to determine with exact precision, what we are to understand by *the table of the Lord*, by that contempt which was expressed for it, and by the *polluted bread* which those unworthy ministers offered upon it. There are two opinions on this subject, but which both issue in the idea we have suggested to you, of our prophet's sentiment.

It is the opinion of some commentators, that by the *table*, of which Malachi speaks, is to be understood the table which corresponded to that placed by Moses, by the command of God, in that part of the tabernacle denominated the *Holy Place*. The law enjoined that there should always be upon that table twelve loaves, or cakes, which we denominate the *shew-bread*, otherwise called *the bread of faces*, not because these cakes were moulded into several sides, or raised into small protuberances, according to the opinion of certain Jewish doctors, but because they were continually exposed in the presence of Jehovah, who was considered as residing in the Holy Place. The law which enjoined the offering of them, had likewise prescribed the rites which were to be observed in presenting that offering. They were to be placed

on the holy table to the number of twelve; they were to be composed of fine flour kneaded into a paste: each cake was to contain an omer of flour. The Jews tell us, that it must have past eleven times through the searse; and if St. Jerome is to be credited, it belonged to the priests to sow, to reap, and to grind the corn, of which the cakes were made, and to knead the dough. Whatever may be the truth as to some of these particulars, to treat the table of the Lord as *contemptible*, to offer unto God *polluted bread*, is conformably to the sentiment which I have detailed, to violate some of the rights which were to be observed in the offering of the cakes, placed, by divine command, on the table which was in the Holy Place.

The generality of interpreters have adopted another opinion, which we have no difficulty in following. By *the table of the Lord*, they here understand the altar of burnt-offerings. It is denominated *the table of the Lord*, in some other passages of scripture; particularly in chap. xli. of the prophecies of Ezekiel. There, after a description of the table of burnt-offerings, it is added, *This is the table that is before the Lord*, ver. 22. On this altar were offered cakes of fine flour, as we see in various passages, particularly in the first verses of chap. ii. of the book of Leviticus. These cakes are represented as if they were the bread of God. The same name was given to every thing offered to deity on that altar. All was called the *bread of God*, or *the meat of God*; for reasons which will be best understood in the sequel. I shall, at present, satisfy myself with quoting a single passage in justification of this remark. It is in chap. xxi. of the book of Leviticus, the 6th verse. Moses, after having laid down the duties of the priests, adds these words: *They shall be holy unto their*

God, and not profane the name of their God : for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God do they offer : therefore they shall be holy. You see that in the Levitical style, they denominated *the meat of God*, or *the bread of God*, not only the cakes which were offered upon the altar, not only the loaves of the shew-bread which were presented on the table in the Holy Place, but all the victims which were consumed by fire on the altar of burnt-offering.

Now, the manner in which those offerings were to be presented, had likewise been laid with singular precision. There was a general law respecting this point, which you will find in chap. iv. of Leviticus: it is enjoined that the victim should be *without blemish ;* and if you wish for a more particular detail on this subject, you may farther consult chap. xxii. of the same book. There we have enumerated ten imperfections, which rendered a victim unworthy of being offered unto God. Some place in this class, not only bodily, but mental imperfections, if this last epithet may be applied to brutes. For example, they durst not have presented unto God, animals of an obstinate, petulant, capricious disposition, and the like. Scruples, by the way, which the pagans themselves, and particularly the Egyptians entertained, respecting the victims which they offered to their gods. They set apart for them the choicest of the flock and of the herd. Herodotus informs us, that in Egypt there were persons specially appointed to the office of examining the victims.

Let us no longer deviate from the principal object of our text. If by *the table of the Lord*, we are to understand, as it is presumeable we ought, the altar of burnt-offerings, *to offer unto God polluted bread*, in the style of Malachi, to say, *the*

table of the Lord is contemptible, is to violate some of the rites prescribed, respecting the offerings which were presented unto God upon that altar. More especially, it is to consecrate to deity victims which had some of the blemishes that rendered them unworthy of his acceptance.

But was it indeed, then, altogether worthy of God to enter into details so minute? But of what importance could it be to the Lord of the universe, whether the victims presented to him were fat or lean, or whether the bread consecrated to him were of wheat or of barley, of fine or of course flour? And though the Jews were subjected to minuteness of this kind, what interest can we have in them, we who live in ages more enlightened; we who are called to serve God only *in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24. and to render him none but a *reasonable service?* Rom. xii. 1. We shall devote the remainder of the time, at present permitted to us, to the elucidation of these questions: we shall endeavor to unfold the great aim and object of our text, and apply it more particularly to the use of our hearers. For this purpose it will be necessary to institute a twofold parallel.

I. We shall institute a parallel between the altar of burnt-offerings, or the table of the shew-bread, and the table of the Eucharist; and shall endeavor to unfold the mystical views of both the one and the other.

II. The second parallel shall be, between the profanation of the altar, or the table of the shew-bread, and the profanation of the Christian sacramental table: we shall indicate what is implied, with respect to the Jews, and with respect to Christians, in offering to God *polluted bread*, and

in looking on *the table of the Lord as contemptible ;* and we will endeavor to make you sensible of the keenness of the reproach conveyed by the mouth of the prophet : *A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is mine honor ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name ? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar ; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee ? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.*

SERMON VII.

PART II.

FOR A COMMUNION SABBATH.

MALACHI i. 6, 7.

A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

HAVING endeavored to remove the difficulties in which the text may seem to be involved, and shewn what we are to understand by *polluted bread*, by *the table of the Lord*, and by calling *the table of the Lord contemptible*, we proceed to institute the twofold parallel proposed.

I. Let us state a parallel between the altar of burnt-offerings, the table of the shew-bread, and the sacramental table of the Lord's supper; the offerings which were presented to God on the first,

and those which we still present to him on the second. The sacramental table of the supper, as the altar of burnt-offerings, and as the table of the shew-bread, is *the table of the Lord.* The viands, presented on both the one and the other, are *the meat of God* or *the bread of God.* And those sacred ceremonies, however they may differ as to certain circumstances, have been, nevertheless, destined to the same end, and represent the same mysteries: namely, the intimate union which God wishes to maintain with his church and people.

You will be convinced that this was the destination of the altar of burnt-offerings, and of the table of the shew-bread, if you have formed a just idea of the temple, and of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was considered to be the tent of God, as the Leader and Commander of Israel and the temple was considered as his palace. For this reason it is, that when God gave commandment to construct the tabernacle, he said to Moses: *Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell amongst them:* Exod. xxi. 8. And when Solomon substituted the temple in room of the tabernacle, he was desirous of conveying the same idea of it: *I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.* The following are the words of a very sensible Rabbi on this subject: "God, to whom be all "glory inscribed, gave commandment to build for "him an house, similar to the palaces of the kings "of the earth. All these things are to be found in "the palaces of kings: they are surrounded by "guards: they have servants to prepare their victuals; musicians who sing to them, and play on "instruments. There are likewise chambers of "perfumes: a table on which their repasts are serv-"ed up: a closet into which favorites only are

" admitted. It was the will of God, that all these " things should be found in his house, that in no- " thing he might yield to the potentates of the " earth. And all these things are designed to make " the people know, that our King, the Lord of " hosts, is in the midst of us."

This general idea of the tabernacle justifies that which we are going to give of the altar of burnt-offerings, and of the table of the shew-bread.

1. That of the altar of burnt-offerings: it was denominated *the table of the Lord*, and the viands served up on it were denominated *the meat* or *the bread of Jehovah*, because the end of the sacrifices there offered up by his command, was to intimate, that he maintained with his people an intercourse as familiar as that of two friends, who eat together at the same table. This is the most ancient, and the most usual idea of sacrifice. When alliances were contracted, victims were immolated: the contracting parties made a common repast on their flesh, to express the intimate union which they formed with each other.

This was the reason of all the rites which were observed between God and the people of Israel, in the alliance formed previous to the promulgation of the law. They are recorded in the twenty fourth chapter of the book of Exodus. Moses represented God; Aaron, Nadab and Abihu his two sons, and the threescore and ten elders represented the whole congregation of Israel. Altars were reared; sacrifices were offered up; they feasted together on the flesh of the victims. It is expressly related that Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and those other venerable personages whom I have mentioned, went up into the mountain, *also they saw God, and did eat and drink:* ver. 11. And to make it apparent that the divine presence inter-

vened, the history adds, that God vouchsafed to bestow sensible tokens of his presence: *And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness*, ver. 10. A work paved with stars, resembling a composition of sapphire-stones; a symbol which, perhaps, God preferred to any other, because the sapphire was, among the Egyptians, an emblem of royalty, as may be seen in their hieroglyphics, which the industry of the learned have preserved to us.

The pagans, likewise, had the same ideas of the sacrifices which they offered up. They did eat together the flesh of the victims, and this they called *eating* or *feasting with the gods*. They sometimes carried off part of it to their own houses; sometimes sent a portion of it to their friends; sometimes they partook of it in the temples themselves, in which tables were placed for the express purpose of celebrating festivals of this kind. Homer, in the Odyssey, introduces Alcinöus, speaking to this effect: *The gods render themselves visible to us, when we immolate hecatombs to them, they eat with us, and place themselves by us at the same table.* The same poet, speaking of the solemn festival of the Ethiopians, says that *Jupiter had descended among them, to be present at a festival which they had prepared for him, and that he was attended thither by all the gods.* In another place he tells us, that Agamemnon sacrificed an ox to Jupiter, and that he invited several of the chieftains of the Grecian army, to eat of the flesh of that animal. He relates something similar respecting Nestor.

Hence it comes to pass, that the phrase, *to make a feast*, is very frequently employed by sacred and profane authors, to express performing acts of idola-

trous worship. In this sense it is that we are to understand it, in that passage of the prophet Ezekiel, where, enumerating the characters of the just man, this is laid down as one, *He hath not eaten upon the mountains*, chap. xviii. 6; that is, who hath not been a partaker in the sacrifices of the idolatrous. In burnt-offerings, the part of the victim consumed by fire, was considered as the portion of Deity. Of this I shall adduce only a single instance, that I may not load my discourse with too many quotations. Solinus relates, that those who offered up sacrifices to idols on Mount Etna, constructed their altars on the brink of its crater: that they placed bundles of dried sprigs upon those altars, but that they applied no fire to them. They pretended, that when the Divinity, in honor of whom these rites were performed, was pleased to accept these sacrifices, the bundles of sprigs spontaneously caught fire: that the flame approached the persons who were celebrating the sacred festivity: that it encompassed them round and round, without doing them any harm; and thus was declared the acceptance of their abolition.

In like manner, in the sacrifices which were offered upon the altar of burnt-offerings, one part of the victim was for the people, another part for the priest, and another part was consumed by fire: this last was considered as the portion of God: this was particularly denominated the *meat* or *the bread of God*; and the whole solemnity was intended, as he had said, to represent the intimate union, and the familiar intercourse, which God wished to maintain between himself and his people.

2. The same was likewise the design of the table of the shew-bread. It was natural that in the tabernacle, which was considered as the tent of Jehovah, and in the temple which was afterwards

considered as his palace, there should be a table replenished with provision for himself and for his ministers. It was the command of God, that twelve of those cakes should be exhibited continually on the table of the sanctuary, to denote the twelve tribes of Israel. This same number was kept up even after the revolt of the ten tribes: because there were always worshippers of the true God, scattered over the whole twelve tribes. These cakes, exposed continually in the presence of Jehovah, were an invitation given to the revolted tribes, to maintain his worship, and to serve him conformably to the rites which he himself had been pleased to prescribe by the hand of Moses. This was likewise the grand motive used by Abijah, king of Judah, to bring back the Israelites to their allegiance: 2 Chron. xiii. 9, &c.

In this same sense is the table of the Eucharist, likewise, *the table of the Lord*. In this same sense, we consider as *the meat of God*, or as *the bread of God*, these august symbols which are presented to us in the holy sacrament of the supper. These two solemn ceremonies have exactly one and the same end in view. The end proposed by the table of the Eucharist, as by that of the altar of burnt-offerings, or by the table of *the shew-bread*, is to form, and to maintain between God and us, an intercourse of familiar friendship; it is to form, between God and us, the most intimate union which it is possible to conceive as subsisting between two beings so very different as are the Creator and the creature. What proofs of love can be interchanged by two friends united in the tenderest bonds, which God and the believer do not mutually give and receive at the Eucharistical table!

Two friends intimately united, become perfectly reconciled to each other, when some interposing

cloud had dimed the lustre of friendship, and they repair, by warmer returns of affection, the violence which love had suffered under that fatal eclipse. This is what we experience at the table of the holy sacrament. That august ceremony is a mystery of reconciliation between the penitent sinner and the God of mercy. On the one part, the penitent sinner presents unto God *a broken and contrite heart*, Psa. li. 17. for grief of having offended him: he pours into the bosom of his God, the tears of repentance; he protests that if the love which he has for his God has undergone a temporary suspension, it never was entirely broken asunder; and if the flame of that affection has been occasionally smothered under the ashes, yet it was never entirely extinguished: he says to him with Thomas, recovered from his paroxysm of incredulity: *My Lord and my God; my Lord and my God*, John xx. 28: and with Peter, restored to favor after he had denied his master: *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*, John xxi. 17. And on the other part, the God of mercy extends his bowels of compassion toward the believer: he gives him assurance that his repentance is accepted, and speaks peace inwardly to his conscience, saying: *Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*, Matt. ix. 2.

Two friends intimately united, lose sight, in some sense, of the difference which there may be between their respective conditions. This, too, is what the believer experiences at the Lord's table. On the one part, though there must ever be an immeasurable abyss between God and us, we go to him as to our brother, as to our friend; shall I presume to add, as to our equal? And on the other part, God is pleased to lay aside, in condescension to our weakness, if the expression be law-

ful, the rays of his divine majesty, with which the eyes of mortals would be dazzled into blindness. Jesus Christ clothes himself with our flesh and blood: and of that community of nature makes up a title of familiarity with us; according to those words of the apostle: *both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren,* Heb. ii. 11, 12.

Two friends intimately united, blend their goods and fortune, in blending their condition. This likewise the believer experiences in the holy sacrament of the supper. On the one hand, we devote to God all that we are: we promise him that there is no band so tender but what we shall be ready to break asunder; no passion so dear, but that we are determined to sacrifice it; no possession so precious, but that we are cheerfully disposed to resign, whenever his glory requires it at our hands. And on the other hand, God draws nigh to us with his grace, with his aid, and, to say all in one word, he comes to us with his Son: he gives us this Son, as the Son gives himself to us: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,* John iii. 16: *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,* John xv. 13.

Two friends intimately united, however well assured they may be of reciprocal tenderness, take pleasure in making frequent repetition of the expressions of it. Friendship has its high festivals, its overflowings, its extasies. This too is the experience of the saints at the table of the Lord. There the soul of the believer says to his Redeemer: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the*

faith of the Son of God, who loved me: and gave himself for me, Gal. ii. 20. And there it is, on the other hand, that God communicates to the soul of the believer, the full assurance of his love: *for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,* Isaiah liv. 10.

Thus it is, my brethren, that the altar of burnt-offerings, or the table of the shew-bread, and the Eucharistical table of the Lord's Supper, present the self-same mysteries to the eye of faith. Thus it is that both the one and the other are *the table of the Lord*, and that the repast served upon it, is *the meat of God*, or *the bread of God.* Thus it is, that in both the one and the other of those solemn ceremonies, the end which God proposes to himself is to form with men an union the most intimate and the most tender.

Having thus stated the first parallel proposed, that of the altar of burnt-offerings, or the table of the shew-bread, and the sacramental table of the Lord's Supper, we now proceed,

II. To state the parallel between *the profanation* of the altar, or the table in the ancient sanctuary, and *the profanation* of the sacramental table of the Eucharist: that is, to state the parallel between the duties prescribed to the ancient Jews, and those which are prescribed to Christians, when they draw nigh to God in the holy ordinance of the supper. As they trace the same important truths, they enforce the same practical obligations. What made the ancient Jews profane the table of the Lord? How came they to say *the table of the Lord is contemptible?* How durst they offer *pol-*

luted bread upon his altar? It was, 1. Because they formed no just ideas of the end which God proposed to himself, when he enjoined the observance of those solemnities. It arose, 2. From their unwillingness to fulfil the moral engagements which the ceremonial observance imposed. Finally, 3. It proceeded from their wanting a just sense of the value of the blessings communicated by these. Now the sources of unworthy communicating, so common in the Christian world, are precisely the same. Want of illumination; want of virtue; want of feeling. Want of illumination, which prevents their knowing the meaning and design of our sacred mysteries. Want of virtue, which prevents their immolating to God all the vices which separate between him and them. Want of feeling, which prevents their being kindled into gratitude, and love, and holy fervor, when God discloses to them, at his table, all the treasures of felicity and glory. Three heads of comparison between the priests of Malachi's days, and many who bear the Christian name among ourselves. Three touchstones furnished to assist you in the examination of your own consciences. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.*

1. Want of illumination. The priests of Malachi's days did not form ideas sufficiently just of the end which Jehovah proposed to himself, when he enjoined the presenting of offerings, on the altar of burnt-offering, and on the table of the shew-bread. Expressly set apart for teaching those great truths to others, they remained themselves in a state of ignorance. They had no other qualifica-

tion to be the ministers of religion, except the tribe from which they descended, and the habit which they wore. Our prophet upbraids them with this gross and criminal ignorance: *The priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts: but ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law*, chap. ii. 7, 8. They had not only conceived false ideas of religion themselves, but they communicated these to the people. The prophet does not indicate precisely respecting what points the ignorance of those unworthy ministers was most conspicuous. But we may form a judgment of the case from the character of their successors, it was impossible to entertain ideas of religion more false than those which they propagated. How wretched was the doctrine of the Rabbins, who were contemporary with our blessed Lord, and of those of modern times! Miserable conceits; insipid allegories; imaginary mysteries; puerile relations. These constituted the great body of the Rabbinical theology. Would to God that such whims were to be found only among Rabbins! But we must not pursue this reflection. Nothing more is wanting, many a time, but a single, ignorant, prejudiced pastor, to perpetuate ignorance, and transmit prejudice, for ages together in a church. This was evidently the case in the times of our prophet; and this it was which dictated these keen reproaches: *ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts*, chap. ii. 8.

Want of illumination: the first head of comparison between the criminality of the priests of Malachi's days, who said, *the table of the Lord is con-*

temptible, and the criminality of professing Christians, who profane the sacramental table. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's supper, is to partake of the symbols there presented, without having maturely considered the great truths which they represent. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's supper, is to communicate, without having any other ideas of the mysteries of the incarnation of the Son of God, which are there unfolded, than those which we had of them in the days of our childhood. To profane the ordinance of the Lord's supper, is to believe, on the faith of a man's pastor, or of his ancestors, that God sent his Son into the world, to redeem the human race, and to take no pains to be informed on what principles that doctrine is established.

To present *polluted bread on the altar of God;* to say, *the table of the Lord is contemptible:* it is the crime of that young man, who would account himself degraded by applying to the study of his catechism, by acquiring more perfect knowledge of his religion; who would rather continue to grovel in ignorance, than to employ the means necessary to the attainment of instruction. It is the crime of that head of a family, who is so far from being in a condition to communicate religious instruction to his children, that he himself is a stranger to it. It is the crime of that magistrate, who, under pretence of a load of public business, will not take time seriously to examine, whether there be a God in heaven, and whether the scriptures are of divine original and authority. It is the crime of that female, who, under pretence of the weakness of her sex, debases the dignity of her nature, and devotes her whole attention to the management of her domestic concerns. Look well to it, examine yourselves carefully. Is there no one among you,

who can discern his own resemblance in any of these characters? Is it a knowledge of the truth, or the power of prejudice, or compliance with custom, which induces you to assume the livery of Christianity? It is the doctrine of a learned divine, and the authority of your fathers; or is it the fruit of serious study, and enlightened persuasion? Want of illumination; this is the first article of comparison between the profane priests of Malachi's days, and profane Christians of our own times: *you offer polluted bread upon mine altar; ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible.*

2. The priests of Malachi's days profaned the table of the Lord, in refusing to fulfil the moral engagements which the ceremonial observance imposed, in the symbols of a secret union with deity. While they were professedly uniting themselves to the *Holy One of Israel*, they entertained sentiments the most criminal, and were chargeable with practices the most irregular and impure. They participated in the table of the Lord, while their hands were defiled with *the accursed thing;* and they presumed, by offering to God a part of what they had forcibly or fraudulently taken away from their neighbors, to make him, in some measure, an accomplice in their injustice and rapacity. With this they are reproached in the 12th and 13th verses of the chapter from which our text is taken: ye have polluted my table, in presenting upon it that which is *torn* or *stolen.* They were partakers of the table of the Lord, at the very time when they were avowedly living in forbidden wedlock with pagan women. With this they are upbraided in the second chapter of this prophecy, at the eleventh verse: *Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel, and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the*

Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. They were partakers of the table of the Lord, at the very time when they were practising criminal divorces, and indulging themselves in sentiments the most barbarous and inhuman, toward persons whom the laws of marriage ought to have rendered dear and respectable to them. With this they are reproached in tho 13th verse of the same chapter: *This have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regarded not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good-will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet sh is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.* They were partakers of the table of the Lord, while they impiously dared to accuse him, not only of tolerating vice, but of loving and approving it. With this too, they are reproached in the 17th verse of that chapter: *Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?*

Want of virtue: a second point of comparison between the priests who said, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, and professors who, to this day, profane the holy ordinance of the supper. Can any among you discern your own likeness under this character? Are you going to avow unto the Lord an inviolable fidelity; or, while you are partaking of his grace, have you a secret reservation disrespectful to his laws? Is it your determination to put in practice the great, the essential virtues of the Christian life; or do you mean to satisfy yourselves

with discharging the petty duties of morality, and with attending to the formal and less important obligations of religion? Are you going to declare war against every thing which opposes the empire of righteousness in your heart, or are you reserving the indulgence of some favorite passion, some Dalila, some Drusilla? Are you disposed to prescribe to your progress in grace a fixed point, beyond which it is needless to aim; or is it your fixed resolution, through grace, to be continually advancing toward perfection? Are you going to satisfy yourselves with vague designs; or are your projects to be supported by just measures and sage precautions?

3. Finally, the priests of Malachi's days profaned the table of the Lord, from their being destitute of a just sense of the inestimable value of the blessings communicated. It seemed to them, as if God put a price too high on the benefits which he profered; and that, every thing weighed and adjusted, it was better to go without them, than to purchase them at the rate of such sacrifices as the possession of them demanded. This injurious mode of computation is reproved in very concise, but very energetic terms, chap. i. 13. *Ye said, What a weariness is it!* and in another place, chap. iii. 14. *Ye have said it is in vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?* and at the very beginning of the book of this prophecy: *I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?* This was offering an insult to deity, if the expression be warrantable, in the tenderest part. He declares to us, that he stands in no need of our worship and of our homage; that, exalted to the height of felicity and glory, he can derive no ad-

vantage from our obedience and submission: that his laws are the fruit of love, and that the virtue which he prescribes to us, is the only path that can conduct us to the sovereign good. The priests belied this notion of religion.

Want of feeling: a third article of comparison between the profanation of the table of the Lord, of which those detestable wretches rendered themselves guilty, and the guilt of Christian professors, who profane the holy table of the Lord's Supper. A Christian who partakes of this sacred ordinance, ought to approach it with a heart penetrated by the unspeakable greatness of the blessings there tendered to our acceptance. He ought to view that sacred table as the centre, in which all the benedictions bestowed by the Creator meet. He ought to be making unremitting efforts to measure the boundless dimensions of the love of God, to implore the aid of the Spirit, that he may be enabled to view it in all its extent, and to *comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love*, Eph. iii. 18. He ought to be contemplating that chain of blessings which are there displayed in intimate and inseparable union: *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . . moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified*, Rom. viii. 29, 30. Under a sense of favors so numerous and so distinguishing, he ought to cry out with the Psalmist: *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy*

pleasure, Psa. xxxvi. 7, 8. He ought to exclaim, with a soul absorbed in the immensity of the divine goodness: *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, Psa. lxiii. 5. He ought, above all, to be struck with the incomprehensible disproportion there is between what God does for us, and what he requires of us. He ought to make the same estimate of things that St. Paul did: *I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*, Rom. viii. 18. every thing fairly considered, *I reckon* that the trouble which the study of his religion demands, the sacrifices exacted of God, the constraint to which I am subjected in immolating to him my sinful passions, in resisting a torrent of corruption, in struggling against the influence of bad example, in straining to rise above flesh and blood, above self-love and nature: every thing fairly considered, *I reckon* that whatever is demanded of us by God, when we come to his table, is not once to be compared with the favors which he there dispenses, with the grand objects which he there displays, with the pardon which he there pronounces, with the peace of conscience which he there bestows, with the eternal glory which he there promises. To be destitute of such feelings as these, when we partake of the Lord's supper, is to profane it. Examine yourselves once more by this standard. Want of feeling: this was the third head of comparison between profane Jews, and profane Christian professors: *Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible.*

Let each of us examine himself by an application of truths now delivered. I shall address myself,

1. To those who, on reviewing their former communion services, see cause to consider themselves

as chargeable with the guilt which God imputed to the Jews who lived in the days of Malachi. And would to God that this topic of discourse might have no reference to any one in this assembly! Would to God that no one of you might be justly ranked in any of the odious classes which we have enumerated!

But only employ a moment's reflection, on the shortness of the time usually devoted to preparation for partaking of the Lord's supper. It is evident, as I think, from all we have said, that the preparation necessary to a worthy receiving of it, is a work, nay a work which calls for both attention and exertion. But do we, of a truth, set apart much of our time to this work? I do not mean to examine all the cases in which a man may communicate unworthily; I confine myself to a single point, and only repeat this one reflection: Preparation for the Lord's table is a work which requires time, attention, exertion. That is enough: that proves too much against us all. For, we are constrained to acknowledge, that it is by no means customary among us to retire for meditation, to fast, to engage in peculiar acts of devotion, on the days which precede a communion solemnity. It is no unusual thing to see on those days at many of our houses, parties formed, social festivity going on: in these we see the same games, the same amusements, the same dissipation as at other times. I have reason to believe, that in other Protestant countries, though the same corruption but too universally prevails, I believe, nevertheless, that such days are there distinguished by the suspension of parties of pleasure, by the discontinuance of certain practices, perhaps abundantly innocent in themselves, but, at the same time, too foreign to the design of the holy communion, to engage our

attention, when we have an immediate prospect of partaking of it. But in these provinces, we are so far from coming up to the spirit and the truth of Christianity, the exterior order and decency of it are hardly observed.

But if this reflection be insufficient to convince you of a truth so mortifying, as that there is much unworthy communicating in the midst of us; think, I beseech you, on the slightness of the changes which these solemnities produce. Here is the touch-stone; this is the infallible standard by which to determine the interesting question under discussion. Four times a year we almost all of us come to the table of the Lord Jesus Christ; four times a year we partake of the holy sacrament of the supper; four times a year, consequently, this church ought to assume a new appearance; four times a year we ought to see multitudes of new converts! But do we see them of a truth? Ah! I dare not dive to the bottom of this mortifying subject. The evil is but too apparent: we have but too good reason to allege, that there is much unworthy communicating in the midst of us.

It is with you, unhappy professors of the Christian name, with you, who have so often found out the fatal secret of drawing a mortal poison from that sacred table: with you, who are, by and by, going once more, perhaps, to derive a curse from the very bosom of benediction, and death from the fountain of life.

Do not deceive yourselves; seek not a disguise from your own wretchedness; think not of extenuating the apprehension of your danger: listen, O listen to the fearful threatenings denounced, by the prophet, against God's ancient people, after he had addressed them in the words of the text: *Cursed be the deceiver which . . . . voweth and sa-*

crificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing . . . . . if ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings . . . . I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, chap. i. 14. ii. 2, 3.

But on the other hand, infuse not poison into your wounds, aggrevate not the image of your wretchedness, but attend to the comfortable words which immediately follow those of my text: *Now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us . . . . he will regard your persons,* ver. 9. The sentence of your condemnation is not yet executed: the doom of death, which has been pronounced against you, is not irrevocable. I see you still blended with Christians who have communicated worthily, and who are going to repeat that delightful service: I still behold *the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering . . . . leading you to repentance,* Rom. ii. 4. and you may still become partakers in the blessedness of this day.

You must have recourse to that same Jesus whom you have so cruelly insulted: you must be covered with that very blood which you have *trampled under foot* in a manner so profane: you must flee and take refuge under the shadow of that very cross, to which you was going to nail afresh the Lord of glory: you must, by ardent and importunate supplication, avert the thunderbolt which is ready to be launched against your guilty head: *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure,* Psa. xxxviii. 1. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: . . . . deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: re-*

store unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit, Psa. li. 4. 14. 12.

But above all resolutions sincere, determined, efficacious, followed up by execution from the moment you retire from this place, must supply the want of preparation, and the communicating of this day must make up the defects of all that preceded it. Ah! if God has not, in mercy, granted you such dispositions as these, may he inspire you, at least, with a resolution not to approach his table, for fear of arming his right hand with hotter thunderbolts to crush and destroy you! or rather, may God grant you those happy dispositions, and graciously accept them when bestowed! May it please God to be disarmed by your repentance, to gather up your tears, to regard with an eye of favor your efforts, your feeble efforts! May God grant your absolution, your salvation, to the earnest prayers of these his faithful servants, or rather, to the all-powerful intercession of the Redeemer, unprotected by which the most eminent of saints durst not lift up their eyes to heaven, and approach the throne of the divine Majesty.

2. I now turn to you, my dearly beloved brethren, who, while you reflect on communion seasons past, can enjoy the testimony of conscience, that you draw nigh to God in some state of preparation, and that you have reason to hope for a repetition of the same felicity. This ceremony is so august; the mysteries which it unfolds, are so awful; the punishment denounced against those who profane it, is so tremendous, that it is impossible to escape every emotion of fear, when engaged in the celebration of it. Study to be sensible of your own weakness. Say, in the language of repentance the most lively and sincere, and of humility the most profound: *If thou, Lord, should mark*

iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand? Psa. cxxx. 3. *O Lord God, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewn unto thy servant,* Gen. xxxii. Stand in awe of the presence of the Majesty of God Almighty; cry out with Jacob: *How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,* Gen. xxviii. 17.

But while you render unto God the homage of holy fear, honor him likewise with that of holy confidence. Think not that he loves to be always viewed as *the great, the mighty, and the terrible God,* Neh. ix. 32. the God who *is a consuming fire,* Heb. xii. 29. He draws nigh to you in this ordinance, not with awful manifestations of vengeance, but with all the attractions of his grace, with all the gifts of his spirit, with all the demonstrations of his love. Bow down over the mystical ark, together with the celestial intelligences, and admire the wonders which it contains, and, beholding with them *the glory* of your Redeemer, with them cry out: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory,* Isa. vi. 3.

Study to know and to feel the whole extent of your felicity, and let a sense of the benefits with which God hath loaded thee, kindle the hallowed flame of gratitude in your hearts. "Hast thou ever, O my soul, been made sensible of the unbounded nature of thy happiness? Hast thou exerted thyself to the uttermost, to take all the immeasurable dimensions of the love of God? Hast thou reflected profoundly, on a God who was made flesh, who rescues thee from everlasting misery, who covers thy person with his own, that the arrows of divine wrath may pierce him only, without reaching thee? Hast thou seriously considered, that

if God had hurried thee out of the world in a state of unrepented guilt; if he had not plucked thee, by a miracle of grace, out of the vortex of human things, instead of being surrounded, as now, with these thy fellow believers in Christ Jesus, thou mightest have been doomed to the society of demons; instead of those songs of praise to which thy voice is now attuned, thou mightest this day have been mingling thy howlings with those of the victims whom the wrath of God is immolating in the regions of despair." Let the blessedness which God is accumulating upon us, support us under all the ills which we are called to endure. Our life is not yet concluded; our warfare is not yet accomplished.

We are about to return into the world; we have still difficulties and dangers to encounter; bitter potions to swallow; afflictions to suffer; especially in this age of fire and of blood, so fatal to the Christian name. But supported by this peace of God, we shall be able to resist and to overcome the most violent assaults.

We are going to return into the world, amidst the snares of the wicked one; he will still aim many a blow at our souls; this flesh is not yet entirely mortified; the old man has not yet received his death's wound; evil concupiscence is not yet completely extinguished; we shall fall into sin again. Humiliating reflection to a soul which, this day, places all its delight in being united unto God! But, supported by this peace of God, we shall find the means of remedying the weaknesses with which we may be still overtaken, as it has furnished the means of deliverance from those into which we had already fallen.

We are going to return into the world: it is high time to think of our departure out of it. We

are conversant with the living; we must think of being speedily mingled with the dead. We yet live; we must die. We must be looking forward to those mortal agonies which are preparing; to that bed of languishing which is already spread; to that funeral procession which is marshalling for us. But, supported by this peace of God, we shall be more than conquerers in all these conflicts: with *the Spirit of him who hath raised up Christ from the dead*, we shall bid defiance to all the powers of *the king of terrors*. Jesus, who *hath destroyed him who had the power of death*, will deliver us from his dominion. Through that gloomy night which is fast approaching, and which is already covering our eyes with its awful shade, we shall behold the rays of the *Son of righteousness*, and their divine light shall dissipate to us all the horrors of *the valley of the shadow of death*. Amen. To God be honor and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL.

2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

IF there be a passage in the whole Bible capable of inflaming, and at the same time of baffling human curiosity, it is that which I have just now read. I do not mean a vain and presumptuous curiosity, but a curiosity apparently founded on reason and justice. One of the principal causes of our want of ardor in the pursuit of heavenly blessings, is our having no experienced witness, who, after having himself tasted the sweetness of them, conveyed to us clear and distinct ideas on the subject. It is a difficult matter to love that of which we have no knowledge.

St. Paul seems to have been reserved of God to supply this defect, and to fill up, if I may use the

expression, this void in religion. By a supernatural dispensation of grace, he passes into the other world before death, and he returns thence before the general resurrection. The whole church, awakened to eager attention, calls upon him for a detail of the wonders of the world unknown. And as the Israelites, after having dispatched spies into the land of promise, burnt with ardent desire to see and hear them, in order that they might obtain information respecting the country, whether it merited the exertions necessary to acquire possession, in like manner, the Christian world seems to flock round our apostle, in earnest expectation of being informed what that felicity is, into which they are invited to enter by a gate so strait. They seem with one accord to ask him: What did you hear? What did you see? in the view of determining, upon his report, this all-important question, whether they should still persevere in their exertions to surmount the obstacles which they have to encounter in the way of salvation, or whether they should relinquish the pursuit.

But St. Paul fulfils not this expectation: he maintains a profound silence respecting the objects which had been presented to his mind: he speaks of his rapture only in the view of confounding those false teachers who took upon them to set at nought his ministry: and all the description he gives of Paradise, amounts to no more than a declaration of his own utter inability to describe what he had seen and heard. *I knew a man in Christ: a man in Christ*, that is to say, a Christian, and by this denomination the apostle is characterizing himself, *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to*

the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

We propose in the following discourse, my brethren, to attempt a solution of the difficulty which arises from this silence of the apostle. We propose to discuss this singular, but interesting question: Wherefore is the celestial felicity *unspeakable?* Wherefore should it *be unlawful for a man to utter* it? We shall begin with some elucidation of the expressions of our text, inquiring, 1. Into the era to which reference is here made; *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago.* 2. By considering what is said respecting the manner of this rapture; *Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.* 3. What we are to understand by *Paradise,* and *the third heaven.* 4 Finally, What ideas we are to affix to those *unspeakable words* to which our apostle alludes in the text: and these will constitute the first general division of our subject.

But in the second, which we have principally in view, we shall examine the point already indicated, by inquiring, Whether the silence of scripture, respecting a state of future happiness, suggests any thing tending to cool our ardor in the pursuit of it: we shall endeavor to make you sensible, that nothing is so much calculated to convey lofty ideas of the Paradise of God, as that very veil which conceals it from our eyes. If you fully enter into the great aim and end of this discourse, it will produce on your minds those effects to which all our exhortations, all our importunities, are adapted, namely, to kindle in your hearts an ardent desire

to go to God; to put into your mouths that exclamation of the Psalmist: *How great is thy goodness, O God, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!* Psa. xxxi. 19: to place you in the very situation of our apostle, who, after having been *caught up to the third heaven*, could no longer endure to live upon the earth, had his eyes opened to every path that led to death, could talk no more of any thing but of dying, but of *finishing his course*, 2 Tim. iv. 7. but of being *absent from the body*, 2 Cor. v. 8. but of *departing*, but of *being with Christ, which was* to him *far better*, Phil. i. 23.

I. We begin with some elucidation of the expressions of the text, and of these,

1. The first refers to the era of St. Paul's rapture: I knew a man in Christ, *above fourteen years ago.* But were we to enter upon a complete discussion of this question, it would occupy much more time than is allotted for the whole of our present exercise. Never had a preacher a fairer opportunity of wasting an hour to his hearers, in useless investigation, and impertinent quotations. We could easily supply you with an ample list of the opinions of interpreters, and of the reasons adduced by each in support of his own. We could tell you, first, how it is alleged by some, that these *fourteen years* denote the time elapsed from the conversion of St. Paul; and that his rapture took place during those *three days* in which *he was without sight, and did neither eat nor drink*, Acts ix. 9. And to this purpose we could quote Capel, Lira, Cave, Tostat, and many other authors, unknown to the greater part of my audience.

We might add, that some other commentators refer this epoch to the eighth year after St. Paul's

conversion to Christianity, the forty-fourth of Jesus Christ, and the twelfth after his death.

We could shew you how others insist, with a greater air of probability, that the apostle enjoyed this heavenly vision, when, after his contention with Barnabas, humiliating instance of the infirmity of the greatest saints, he prosecuted his ministry in a different track. Those who adopt this opinion, allege, in support of it, the words of St. Paul in chap. xxii. of the Acts, ver. 17. *It comes to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance.* But disquisitions of this sort are unworthy of the place which I now have the honor to fill. I have matters of much higher importance to propose to you.

2. The manner of St. Paul's rapture stands in need, perhaps, of some elucidation. He has expressed it in terms very much calculated to check curiosity. *Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell.* We, accordingly, presume, not to pursue researches on points respecting which the apostle himself professes ignorance.

Let it only be remarked, that God was pleased, in former times, to manifest himself in many different manners. Sometimes it was by a voice: witness that which issued out of the cloud, Exod. xvi. 10: witness that which addressed Moses from the burning bush, Exod. iii. 4: witness that which thundered from Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, Exod. xix. 16: witness that which answered Job out of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1: witness that from above the mercy-seat, Exod. xxv. 22.

He was pleased, at other times, to reveal himself in dreams and visions of the night; as to Jacob

at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 12. to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 3. and to Pharaoh's butler, Gen. xl. 9.

He sometimes manifested himself in visions to persons awake. Thus he presented to Moses in Horeb a bush burning with fire yet unconsumed, Exod. iii. 4. to Balaam, an angel with his sword drawn in his hand, Numb. xxii. 31. to Joshua, the captain of the Lord's Host, Jos. v. 15.

He sometimes communicated himself to men through the medium of inspiration, accompanied with emotions which constrained them to speak out. This was the case with Jeremiah, as we read chap. xx. 8, 9. *The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing.*

But of all those miraculous dispensations, the most noble and exalted was that of *rapture* or *extasy*. By the term *extasy*, we mean that powerful conflict, that concentration of thought, that profound intenseness of mental application, under the influence of which the enraptured person is emancipated from the communications of the senses, forgets his body, and is completely absorbed of the object of his meditations.

Rapture is perhaps a degree superior to *extasy*. Sometimes it affects *the mind*. This is the case when God, in virtue of that sovereign power which he possesses over the soul of man, excites in it the same ideas, causes it to perceive the same objects, with which it would be struck, were the body, to which it is united, really in a place from whence it is extremely remote. It is thus that we must explain the rapture of the prophet Ezekiel, chap. viii. 3.

and that of which St. John speaks in the book of Revelation, chap. i. 10.

It sometimes affects *the body*. This was the case of Philip, who, after he had converted to the faith of Christ the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and baptized him, was *caught away by the spirit of the Lord, that the eunuch saw him no more*, Acts viii. 39.

Though St. Paul has spoken very sparingly of the manner in which God was pleased to reveal himself to him, he has said enough to shew that it is holy *rapture* he means. But whether it were that which transported the body into another place, or that which transported the mind only: nay, whether there be a real difference between rapture and extasy, no one can pretend to determine without incurring the charge of presumption. The apostle himself declares that it surpassed his own knowledge: *whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth; such an one caught up to the third heaven . . . . caught up into Paradise.*

8. *The third heaven, Paradise:* another subject of elucidation. The *third heaven* is the habitation of the blessed: that in which God displays the most splendid and glorious tokens of his presence; this is disputed by no one. But the other expression employed by St. Paul, *caught up into Paradise*, has furnished matter for controversy among the learned. It has long been made a question whether *Paradise* and the third heaven denoted one and the same place. Certain modern interpreters have maintained the negative, with excessive warmth. A great number of the ancient fathers had adopted the same opinion. They considered *Paradise* as a mansion in which the soul resided till the resurrection, and they distinguished

it from heaven. Justin Martyr, disputing with Tryphon, condemns, as equally erroneous, the denying of the doctrine of the resurrection, and the opinion which supposes that the souls of men go to God immediately after death. In this they followed the prejudices of the Jews. Many of them believe that the souls of good people are translated to the garden of Eden, to wait for the day of the resurrection; they accordingly employ this form of prayer for dying persons: "May his soul be received into the garden of Eden; may he have his part in Paradise: may he repose, and sleep in peace till the coming of the Comforter, who shall speak peace to the fathers. O ye to whom the treasures of Paradise are committed, open now its gates, that he may enter in."

But this error, however long it may have subsisted, and by whatever great names it may have been maintained, is nevertheless an error, as might be demonstrated by more arguments than we have now leisure to adduce. You have only to read the prayer which Jesus Christ addressed to his father a little before his death, where you will find him demanding immediate admission into the heavenly felicity. He says, likewise, to the penitent thief on the cross: *verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. *Paradise*, therefore, is the place in which God displays the most august symbols of his presence, and it is not different from the *third heaven*.

Now if it be asked why is this name given to the *third heaven*, it will be necessary to recur to its first original. Persons who have applied to the dry study of Etymology, assure us that the word is of Persian extraction, and that the Persians gave the name of Paradise to the parks and gardens of their kings. It came in process of time to denote all

places of a similar description. It passed from the Persians to the Greeks, to the Hebrews, to the Latins. We find it employed in this sense in Nehemiah, ii. 8: in Ecclesiastes ii. 5: in many profane authors; and the Jews gave this name to the garden of Eden in which Adam was placed. You will find it in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. But enough, and more than enough, has been suggested on this head.

4. There is but one particular more that requires some elucidation. *I knew a man*, adds the apostle, who *heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*. To *see things*, and to *hear words*, are, in the style of the sacred writers, frequently used as phrases of similar import, and it is not on this ground that the difficulty of the present article presses. But, what can be the meaning of the apostle, when he asserts that the words which he heard, or the things which he saw, *are unspeakable*, and *which it is not lawful for a man to utter?* Had he been laid under a prohibition to reveal the particulars of his vision? Had he lost the ideas of it? Or were the things which he had heard and saw of such a nature as to be absolutely inexpressible by mortal lips? There is some plausible reasoning that may be employed in support of each of the three opinions.

The first has numerous partizans. Their belief is that God had revealed mysteries to St. Paul, but with a prohibition to disclose them to the world. They believe that the apostle, after having been rapt into the third heaven, had received a charge similar to that which was given to St. John, in a like situation, and which is transmitted to us in chap. x. of the Book of Revelation, 4th verse; *Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.* Thus it was that the

Pagans denominated certain of their mysteries *ineffable*, because it was forbidden to reveal them. Thus, too, the Jews called the name of Jehovah *ineffable*, because it was unlawful to pronounce it.

The second opinion is not destitute of probability. As the soul of St. Paul had no sensible intercourse with his body, during this rapture, it is not unlikely, that the objects which struck him, having left no trace in the brain, he lost the recollection of a great part of what he had seen.

But we are under no obligation to restrict ourselves to either of these senses. The words of the original translated *unspeakable, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*, frequently denote that which is not of a nature to be explained: thus it is said, that *the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. Thus, too, St. Peter mentions a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, chap. i. 8. and we shall presently see that the heavenly felicity is, in this sense, unspeakable.

Again, among those who have pursued researches respecting the things which St. Paul declares to be *unspeakable*, some have pretended to tell us, that he means the divine essence: others, that it was the Hierarchal order of the celestial Intelligences; others, that it was the beauty and excellency of glorified souls; others, that it was the mystery of the rejection of the Jewish nation, and of the calling of the Gentiles; others, that it was the destination of the Christian church through its successive periods. But wherefore should we attempt to fix precise limits to the things which our apostle heard and saw. He was rapt up to the very seat of the blessed; and he there, undoubtedly, partook of the felicity which they enjoy.

Had men employed their imagination only, on

the discussion of this question, no great harm could have ensued. But it is impossible to behold without indignation, the inventors of fictitious pieces carrying their insolence so far, as to forge writings, which they ascribed to the Spirit of God himself, and in which they pretended those mysteries were explained. St. Epiphanius relates, that certain ancient heretics, these were *Gaianites*, or *Cainites*, had invented a book, which was afterwards adopted by the Gnostics. They gave it the name of *The Ascension of St. Paul*, and presume to allege, that this book discovered what those *unspeakable things* were, which the apostle had heard. St. Augustin speaks of the same work, as a gross imposture. Nicephorus tells us, that a story was current, under the emperor Theodosius, of the discovery, in the house of St. Paul at Tarsus, of a marble chest, buried in the earth, and which contained the *Apocalypse of St. Paul*. He himself refutes this fiction by the testimony of a man of Tarsus, a member of the Presbytery.

The impostor, who is the author of the work ascribed to Dionysius, the Areopagite, and who gives himself out as that illustrious proselyte of our apostle, boasts of his having heard him relate wonderful things, respecting the nature, the glory, the gifts, the beauty of angels; and upon this testimony it is that he founds the chimerical idea which he has given us of the celestial hierarchy.

But let us have done with all these frivolous conjectures, with all these impious fictions. We are going to propose much nobler objects to your meditation, and to examine, as has been said, this singular, but interesting question: Wherefore is the celestial glory of such a nature as to defy description? Why is it *not lawful for a man to utter them?* We are going to avail ourselves of this

inability to describe these gloriously *unspeakable* things, as the means of conveying to you exalted ideas of them, and of kindling in your souls more ardent desires after the possession of them. This shall be the subject of the second part of our discourse.

SERMON VIII.

PART II.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL.

2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

HAVING presented you with some brief elucidations of the expressions of the text, namely, 1. respecting the era to which reference is here made; *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago*: 2. respecting the manner of his rapture; *whether in the body, I cannot tell; or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth*: 3. respecting the place to which St. Paul was caught: *Paradise, the third heaven*: and 4. respecting what he there saw and heard; *unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*: We proceed to,

II. The second general head, namely, to enquire, Whether the silence of scripture, on the subject of a state of future happiness, suggests any thing that has a tendency to cool our ardor in the pursuit of it; or, Whether this very vail, which conceals the paradise of God from our eyes, is not, above all things, calculated to convey the most exalted ideas of it.

We refer the felicity of the blessed in heaven to three general notions. The blessed in heaven possess, 1. Superior illumination: 2. They are prompted by inclinations the most noble and refined: 3. They enjoy the purest sensible pleasures. A defect of genius prevents our ability to partake of their illumination: a defect of taste prevents our adopting their inclinations; a defect of faculty prevents our perception of their pleasures. In these three respects, the celestial felicity is *unspeakable:* in these three respects, *it is not lawful for a man to utter it.*

1. The blessed in heaven possess superior *illumination:* a defect of genius prevents our participation of it.

While we are in this world, we are deficient in many ideas. Properly speaking we have ideas of two kinds only: that of body, and that of spirit. The combination of these two ideas forms all our perceptions, all our speculations, the whole body of our knowledge. And whatever efforts may have been made by certain philosophers to prove that we are acquainted with beings intermediate between mind and matter, they have never been able to persuade others of it, and probably entertained no such persuasion themselves. But if all beings which are within the space of our knowledge be referable to these two ideas, where is the person who is bold enough to affirm that there are in fact

no others? Where is the man who dares to maintain, that the creation of bodies and that of spirits have exhausted the omnipotence of the Creator? Who shall presume to affirm that this infinite intelligence, to whom the universe is indebted for its existence, could find only two ideas in his treasures?

May it not be possible, that the blessed in heaven have the idea of certain beings which possess no manner of relation to any thing of which we have a conception upon earth? May it not be possible that God impressed this idea on the soul of St. Paul? May not this be one of the reasons of the impossibility to which he is reduced, of describing what he had seen? For when we speak to other men, we go on the supposition that they have souls similar to our own, endowed with the same faculties, enriched with the same sources of thought. We possess certain signs, certain words, to express our conceptions. We oblige our fellow men to retire within themselves, to follow up their principles, to examine their notions. It is thus we are enabled to communicate our notions to each other. But this is absolutely impracticable with regard to those beings who may be known to the blessed above. There is in this respect no notion in common to us and them. We have no term by which to express them. God himself alone has the power of impressing new ideas on the soul of man. All that men can do is to render us attentive to those which we already have, and to assist us in unfolding them.

Besides, so long as we are upon the earth, we have but a very imperfect knowledge of the two orders of beings, to which all our knowledge is confined. Our ideas are incomplete. We have only

a very imperfect perception of body, and of spirit. We have,

(1) Very imperfect ideas of body. And without entering, here, into the discussion of the endless metaphysical questions of which the subject admits, and, in order to convey an example of it, brought down to the level of the meanest capacity, the magnitude of bodies, and their smallness, almost equally exceed our comprehension. We begin with forming to ourselves the idea of a portion of matter; we divide it into minute particles; we reduce it to powder, till the particles become entirely imperceptible to our senses. When the senses fail, we have recourse to imagination. We sub-divide, in imagination, that same portion of matter, particle after particle, till it is reduced to such a degree of minuteness, as to escape imagination, as it had eluded the senses. After the senses and the imagination have been stretched to the uttermost, we call in thought to our aid: we consult the idea which we have of matter; we subject it to a new sub-division in thought. Thought transcends imagination and the senses. But after having pursued it to a certain point, we find thought absorbed in its turn, and we feel ourselves equally lost, whether we are disposed to admit an infinite progression in this division, or whether we are disposed to stop at a certain determinate point.

What we have said of the smallness of bodies, holds equally true of their immensity of magnitude. We are able, with the help of the senses, of the imagination, and of thought, to increase a mass of matter, to suppose it still greater, to conceive it still exceeding the former magnitude. But after we have acted, imagined, reflected; and, after we have risen in thought to a certain degree of extension, were we disposed to go on to the concep-

tion of one still greater, we should at length feel ourselves absorbed in the inconceivable magnitude of matter, as it had eluded our pursuit by its minuteness. So incomplete are our ideas even of matter. And if so, then,

(2) How much more imperfect still is our knowledge of what relates to mind! Who ever presumed to unfold all that a spirit is capable of? Who has ever determined the connection which subsists within us, between the faculty which feels, and that which reflects? Who has ever discovered the manner in which one spirit is enabled to communicate its feelings and reflections to another? Who has formed a conception of the means by which a spirit becomes capable of acting upon a body, and a body upon a spirit? It is to me, then, demonstrably certain, that we know but in an imperfect manner, the very things of which we have any ideas at all.

The blessed in heaven have complete ideas of these; they penetrate into the minutest particles of matter; they discern all the wonders, all the latent springs, all the subtility of the smallest parts of body, which contain worlds in miniature, an epitome of the great universe, and not less calculated to excite admiration of the wisdom of the Creator; they traverse that immensity of space, those celestial globes, those immeasurable spheres, the existence of which it is impossible for us to call in question, but whose enormous mass and countless multitude, confound and overwhelm us. The blessed in heaven know the nature of spirits, their faculties, their relations, their intercourse, their laws. But all this is inexplicable. Is any one capable of changing our senses? Is any one capable of giving a more extensive range to our imagina-

tion? Is it possible to remove the barriers which limit thought?

While we are on the earth, we discern but very imperfectly the relations which subsist even between the things which we do know. Contracted, incomplete as our ideas are, we should, nevertheless, make some progress in our researches after truth, had we the power of reflecting, of recollection, of fixing our attention to a certain degree, of comparing beings with each other, and thus advancing from those which we already know, to those with which we are hitherto unacquainted. Men are more or less intelligent, according as they are in the habit of being more or less attentive. A man brought up in the midst of noise, in tumult; a man whom tumult and noise pursue wherever he goes, is incapable of composed recollection, because, carrying always in himself a source of distraction, he becomes incapable of profound reflection upon any one object abstracted from, and unconnected with matter. But a philosopher accustomed to meditate, is able to follow up a principle to a degree totally inaccessible to the other. Nevertheless, whatever a man's attainments may be in the art of attention, it must always be contracted within very narrow limits; because we still consist, in part, of body; because this body is ever exciting sensations in the soul; because the soul is continually distracted by these sensations; because that, in order to meditate, there is occasion for a great concourse of the spirits necessary to the support of the body, so that attention wearied out, exhausted, does violence to that body; to such a degree, that if, by the aid of an extraordinary concourse of spirits, we should be disposed to exert the brain beyond a certain pitch, the effort would prove fatal to us.

The blessed in heaven are not liable to have their attention disturbed by the action of the senses. St. Paul, by means of a supernatural interposition, had his soul, if not separated from the body, (for he himself knows not whether his rapture were *in the body, or out of the body,*) at least emancipated from that continual distraction to which it is subject, in virtue of its union with matter. He could be self-collected, attentive, absorbed of the objects which God presented to his mind. He could discern the mutual relation of the designs of eternal wisdom, the harmony of the works of God, the concatenation of his purposes, the combination of his attributes; sublime objects which he could not possibly display to men incapable of that degree of attention, without which no conception can be formed of those objects.

Does not this first reason, my beloved brethren, of our apostle's silence, on the subject of the heavenly felicity, already produce on your souls the effect at which this discourse is principally aiming? Has it not already kindled within you an ardent desire to attain that felicity? Soul of man, susceptible of so many ideas, of such enlarged knowledge, of illumination so unbounded, is it possible for thee to sojourn, without reluctance, in a body which narrows thy sphere, and cramps thy nobler faculties? Philosopher, who are straining every nerve, who givest thyself no rest, to attain a degree of knowledge incompatible with the condition of humanity: Geometrician, who, after an incredible expence of thought, of meditation, of reflection, art able to attain, at most, the knowledge of the relations of a circle, or of a triangle: Theologian, who, after so many days of labor, and nights of watching, hast scarcely arrived at the capacity of explaining a few passages of holy writ, of

correcting, by an effort, some silly prejudice: wretched mortals, how much are you to be pitied! how impotent and ineffectual are all exertions to acquire real knowledge! I think I am beholding one of those animals, the thickness of whose blood, the grossness of whose humors, the incumbrance of that house with which nature loads them, preventing them from moving with facility; I think I am beholding one of those animals, striving to move over an immense space in a little, little hour. He strains, he bustles, he toils, he flatters himself with having made a mighty progress, he exults in the thought of attaining the end which he had proposed. The hour elapses, and the progress which he has made is a mere nothing, compared with the immensity of the space still untrodden.

Thus, loaded with a body replenished with gross humors, retarded by matter, we are able, in the course of the longest life, to acquire but a very slender and imperfect degree of knowledge. This body must drop: this spirit must disengage itself, before it can become capable of soaring unincumbered, of penetrating into futurity, and of attaining that height and depth of knowledge which the blessed in heaven possess.

Not only from revelation do we derive these ideas; not even from reason, in its present high state of improvement: they were entertained in the ancient Pagan world. We find this subject profoundly investigated, I had almost said exhausted, in the Phædon of Plato. Socrates considers his body as the greatest obstacle in the way of seeking after truth. And this brings to my recollection the beautiful expression of a certain Anchorite, to the same purpose: extenuated, infirm, sinking under a load of years, on the point of expiring, he breaks out into singing. He is asked

Wherefore singest thou? "Ah! I sing," says he, "because I see that wall tumbling down which hinders me from beholding the face of God." Yes, this body is a wall which prevents our seeing God. Fall down, fall down, interposing, invidious wall; fall down, impenetrable wall, and then we shall see God. But to man in his present state, to man loaded with a body like this, the *illumination* of the blessed in heaven, is among the things which are *unspeakable*.

2. The blessed in heaven are prompted by *inclinations* the most noble and refined: a defect of taste prevents our adopting and enjoying the same inclinations.

All tastes are not similar. Men agree tolerably well in the vague notions of honor, of pleasure, of generosity, of nobility. But that which appears pleasure to one, is insupportable to another: that which appears noble, generous to one, appears mean, grovelling, comtemptible to another. So that the idea which you might suggest to your neighbor, of a pleasant and desirable mode of living, might, in all probability, convey to him ideas of life the most odious and disgusting.

Who is able to make a man plunged in business to comprehend, that there is pleasure inexpressible in studying truth, in making additions to a stock of knowledge, in diving into mysteries? Who is able to persuade a miser, that there is a delight which nothing can equal, in relieving the miserable, in ministering to their necessities, in sharing fortunes with them, and thus, to use the expression of scripture, to draw nigh to a man's *own flesh*: Isa. lviii. 7.? Who is able to convince a grovelling and dastardly soul, that there is joy to be found in pursuing glory through clouds of smoke and showers of iron, in braving instant and certain dangers,

in bidding defiance to almost inevitable death? In general, what arguments are sufficient to convince a worldling, that the purest and most perfect delights are to be enjoyed, in exercises of devotion, in those effusions of the heart, in that emptying us of ourselves, of which the saints of God have given us such warm recommendations, and such amiable examples? *These are the things of the spirit of God*, which *the natural man receiveth not, because they are spiritually discerned:* 1 Cor. ii. 14. because he is destitute of that taste, which alone can enable him to relish their charms.

Now, my brethern, although the love of God be the principle of all the exalted virtues, possessed by the saints in glory as well as by those who remain still on the earth; although both agree in this general and vague notion, that to love God is the sublimity of virtue: nevertheless, there is a distance so inconceivable, between the love which we have for God, on the earth, and that which inspires the blessed in heaven, that inclinations entirely different result from it.

We know God very imperfectly while we are upon the earth, and our love to him is in proportion to the imperfection of our knowledge. To come to his holy temple; to hearken to his word; to sing his praises; to administer, and to partake of his sacramental ordinances: to pant after a union of which we cannot so much as form an idea; to practise the virtues which our present condition imposes; such is the taste which that love inspires; such are the particular inclinations which it excites in our souls. After all, how often are those feelings blunted by prevailing attachment to the creature? How often are they too faint to animate us to engage in those exercises? How often do we present ourselves before God, like victims dragged

reluctantly to the altar? How often must a sense of duty supply the want of inclination, and hell opening under our feet, produce in our souls the effects which ought to flow from the love of God purely? But, be it as it may, our love, so long as we continue here below, can go no farther than this. That complete devotedness of soul to God, those voluntary sacrifices, that sublimity of virtue which refers every thing to God, and to him alone, are wholly unknown to us; we have neither ideas to conceive them ourselves, nor terms in which to convey them to the minds of others.

The blessed in heaven know God perfectly, and have a love to him proportioned to the perfection of that knowledge, and inclinations proportioned to that love. We know not what may be impressed on the heart of man by the idea of a God known as supremely wise, as supremely powerful, as supremely amiable. The blessed in heaven take pleasure in exercises which scripture describes in language adapted to our present capacities. To this purpose are such as the following expressions, *to cast their crowns before the throne*, Rev. iv. 10: to *behold always the face of their Father which is in heaven*, Matt. xviii. 10: as courtiers do that of their sovereign; to *cover their faces* in his presence, Isa. vi. 2: to *sing a new song before the throne*, Rev. xiv. 3. to fly at his command with the rapidity of the *wind*, and of *a flame of fire*, Heb. i. 7: to *cry one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts*, Isa. vi. 3: to burn, to bear the name of *Seraphim*, that is, burning with zeal. These are emblems presented to our imagination. The thing itself cannot be brought down to the level of our capacity. We are ignorant of the effect, because the cause is far beyond our comprehension. We are strangers to the joy flowing from

it, because we want the taste which alone can enable us to relinquish such delights.

Nay more: with the taste which we have upon the earth, such and such a joy of the blessed above, would appear the severest of punishments to the greatest of saints among us. The essence of the felicity of saints in glory, consists in loving God only, and all other things in reference to God. The sentiments by which they are animated relatively to other beings, are not sentiments of blood, of the spirits, of temperament, like those by which we are actuated here below, they are regulated by order; they refer all to God alone: the blessed above are affected with the felicity and the misery of others, only in so far as these relate to the great moving principles by which they are governed. But that felicity depicted to men upon earth, and applied to particular cases, would appear to them a real punishment. Could a father relish a felicity which he was told he could not possibly share with his child? Could the friend enjoy tranquillity, were he haunted with the thought, that the friend of his heart lay groaning under chains of darkness? Have we so much love for order; are we sufficiently disposed to refer all our inclinations to God, so as to have that taste, which considers objects as amiable and interesting, only as they have a relation to that order, and to that glory of the Creator? And do we not feel, that a felicity relative to a taste which we do not possess, nay opposite to that which we now have, is a felicity *unspeakable*.

3. The third notion which we suggested to you, of the heavenly felicity, is that of *sensible pleasure*. A defect of faculty prevents our perception of their pleasures.

Be not surprized that we introduce sensations of pleasure, into the idea of a felicity perfectly pure,

and perfectly conformable to the sanctity of him who is the author of it. Do not suspect that we are going to extract from the grossly sensual notions of Mahomet, the representation which we mean to give you of the Paradise of God. You hear us frequently declaiming against the pleasures of sense. But do not go to confound things, under pretence of perfecting them; and under the affectation of decrying sensible pleasures, let us not consider as an imperfection of the soul of man, the power which it has to enjoy them. No, my brethren, it is, on the contrary, one of its highest perfections, to be susceptible of those sensations, to possess the faculty of scenting the perfume of flowers, of relishing the savor of meats, of delighting in the harmony of sounds, and so of the other objects of sense.

If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because you frequently sacrifice pleasures the most sublime, to such as are pitiful and insignificant; pleasures of everlasting duration to those of a moment.

If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because the attachment which you feel for those of the earth, engages you to consider them as the sovereign good, and prevents your aspiring after that abundant portion, which is laid up for you in heaven.

If we declaim against your pleasures, it is because you regard the creatures through which they are communicated, as if they were the real authors of them. You ascribe to the element of fire the essential property of warming you; to aliments, that of gratifying the palate; to sounds, that of ravishing the ear. You consider the creatures as so many divinities, which preside over your happiness: you pay them homage: you prostrate

your imagination before them: not reflecting that God alone can produce sensations in your soul, and that all these creatures are merely the instruments and the ministers of his providence. But the maxim remains incontrovertible: namely, that the faculty of relishing pleasure is a perfection of our soul, and one of its most glorious attributes.

But what merits particular attention, is, that this faculty which we have of receiving agreeable sensations, is extremely imperfect so long as we remain upon the earth. It is restricted to the action of the senses. Its activity is clogged by the chains which fetter it down to matter. Our souls are susceptible of innumerably more sensations than we ever can receive in this world. As progress in knowledge admits of infinity, so likewise may progress in the enjoyment of pleasure. In heaven the blessed have the experience of this. There God exerts the plenitude of his power over the soul, by exciting in it the most lively emotions of delight: there his communications are proportional to the immortal nature of the glorified spirit. This was produced in the soul of our apostle.

"The pleasures which I have tasted," he seems to say, "are not such as your present faculties can reach. In order to make you comprehend what I have felt, I must be endowed with the power of creating new laws of the union subsisting between your soul and your body. I must be endowed with the capacity of suspending those of nature: or rather, I must be possessed of the means of tearing your soul asunder from that body. I must have the power of transporting you in an extasy, as I myself was. And considering the state in which you still are, I am persuaded that I shall represent to you what my feelings were much better, by telling you that they are things *unspeakable*, than by

attempting a description of them. For when the point in question is to represent that which consists in lively and affecting sensations, there is no other method left, but actually to produce them in the breasts of the persons to whom you would make the communication. In order to produce them, faculties must be found, adapted to the reception of such sensations. But these faculties you do not as yet possess. It is therefore impossible that you should ever comprehend, while here below, what such sensations mean. And it is no more in my power to convey to you an idea of those which I have enjoyed, than it is to give the deaf an idea of sounds, or the blind man of colors."

You must be sensible then, my brethren, that defect in respect of *faculties*, prevents our conception of the *sensible pleasures* which the blessed above enjoy, as want of *taste*, and want of *genius*, prevents our comprehending what are their *inclinations*, and what is their *illumination*. Accordingly, the principal reasons of St. Paul's silence, and of the silence of scripture in general, respecting the nature of the heavenly felicity, present nothing that ought to relax our ardor in the pursuit of it: they are proofs of its inconceivable greatness, and so far from sinking its value in our eyes, they manifestly enhance and aggrandize it. This is what we undertook to demonstrate.

SERMON VIII.

PART III.

THE RAPTURE OF ST. PAUL.

2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

WE have endeavored to elucidate the expressions of our apostle in the text, and to demonstrate that the silence of scripture, on the subject of a state of celestial felicity, suggests nothing that has a tendency to cool our ardor in the pursuit of it; but rather, on the contrary, that this very veil which conceals the Paradise of God from our eyes, is, above all things, calculated to convey the most exalted ideas of it. We now proceed,

III. To conclude our discourse, by making some application of the subject.

Now, if the testimony of an apostle, if the decisions of scripture, if the arguments which have been used, if all this is deemed insufficient, and if, notwithstanding our acknowledged inability to describe the heavenly felicity, you should still insist on our attempting to convey some idea of it, it is in our power to present you with one trait of it, a trait of a singular kind, and which well deserves your most serious attention. It is a trait which immediately refers to the subject under discussion: I mean the ardent desire expressed by St. Paul, to return to that felicity, from which the order of Providence forced him away, to replace him in the world.

Nothing can convey to us a more exalted idea of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, than the effects which it produced on the soul of St. Peter. That apostle had scarcely enjoyed a glimpse of the Redeemer's glory on the holy mount, when behold he is transported at the sight. He has no longer a desire to descend from that mountain; he has no longer a desire to return to Jerusalem; he has forgotten every thing terrestrial, friends, relations, engagements: *Lord it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles*, Matt. xvii. 4. and to the extremity of old age he retains the impression of that heavenly vision, and exults in the recollection of it: *He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*, 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

The idea of the celestial felicity has made a similiarly indelible impression on the mind of St. Paul. More than fourteen years have elapsed since

he was blessed with the vision of it. Nay for fourteen years he has kept silence. This object, nevertheless, accompanies him wherever he goes, and, in every situation, his soul is panting after the restoration of it. And in what way was he to look for that restoration? Not in the way of *extasy*, not in a *rapture*. He was not to be translated to heaven, as Elijah, in a chariot of fire. Necessity was laid upon him of submitting to the law imposed on every child of Adam: *It is appointed to all men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. But no matter; to that death, the object of terror to all mankind, he looks forward with fond desire.

But what do I say, that death simply was the path which St. Paul must tread, to arrive at the heavenly rest? No, not the ordinary death of most men; but death violent, premature, death arrayed in all its terror. Nero, the barbarous Nero, was then upon the throne, and the blood of a Christian so renowned as our apostle, must not escape so determined a foe to Christianity. No matter still. "Let loose all thy fury against me, ferocious tiger, longing to glut thyself with Christian blood: I defy thy worst. Come, executioner of the sanguinary commands of that monster; I will mount the scaffold with undaunted resolution: I will submit my head to the fatal blow with intrepidity and joy." We said, in the opening of this discourse, Paul, ever since his rapture, talks only of dying, only of being *absent from the body*, only of *finishing his course*, only of *departing*. *We that are in his tabernacle do groan, being burdened: . . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 4, 8. *Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which*

I have received of the Lord Jesus, Acts xx. 24. *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better,* Phil. i. 23. We often find men braving death, when at a distance, but shrinking from the nearer approach of the king of terrors. But the earnestness of our apostle's wishes is heightened in proportion as they draw nigh to their centre: when he is arrived at the departing moment, he triumphs: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day,* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

My brethren, you are well acquainted with St. Paul. He was a truly great character. Were we not informed by a special Revelation that he was inspired by the Spirit of God, we must ever entertain high ideas of a man, who had derived his extensive knowledge from the pure sources of the Jewish dispensation: who had ennobled his enlarged and capacious mind by all that is more sublime in Christianity; of a man, whose heart had always obeyed the dictates of his understanding; who opposed Christianity with zeal, so long as he believed Christianity to be false; and who bent the full current of his zeal to the support of Christianity, from the moment he became persuaded that it was an emanation from God.

St. Paul was a man possessed of strong reasoning powers, and we have in his writings many monuments which will convey down to the end of the world, the knowledge of his intellectual superiority. Nevertheless, this man so enlightened, so sage, so rational; this man who knew the pleasures of heaven by experience, no longer beholds any thing on the earth once to be compared with them, or that

could, for a moment, retard his wishes. He concludes, that celestial joys ought not to be considered as too dearly purchased, at whatever price it may have pleased God to rate them, and whatever it may cost to attain them. "*I reckon*," says he, "*I reckon* what I suffer, and what I may still be called to suffer, on the one side: and *I reckon*, on the other, the glory of which I have been a witness, and which I am still to enjoy; I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us:" Rom. viii. 18. *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23.

But who is capable of giving an adequate representation of his transports, so as to make you feel them with greater energy, and, were it possible, to transfuse them into your hearts? Represent to yourself a man, who has actually seen that glory, of which we can give you only borrowed ideas. Represent to yourself a man, who has visited those sacred *mansions*, which are *in the house of the Father*, Jo. xiv. 2. a man who has seen the palace of the sovereign of the universe, and those *thousands*, those *thousand thousands* which surround his throne: Dan. vii. 10; a man who has been in that *new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven*, Rev. iii. 12. in that *new heaven*, and that *new earth*, Rev. xxi. 1. The inhabitants of which are angels, archangels, the seraphim; of which *the lamb* is the *sun* and the *temple*, Rev. xxi. 22, 23. and where *God is all and all*, 1 Cor. xv. 28. Represent to yourself a man, who has heard those harmonious concerts, those triumphant choirs, which sing aloud day and night: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory*, Isa. vi. 3. a man who has heard those celestial multi-

tudes which cry out, saying: *Alleluia ; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God . . . . . and the four and twenty elders* reply, *saying, Amen ; Alleluia . . . . . let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready,* Rev. xix. 1, 4, 7. Represent to yourself a man who has been received into heaven by those angels who *rejoice over one sinner that repenteth,* Luke xv. 7. and who redouble their acclamations when he is admitted into the bosom of glory : or, to say somewhat which has a still nearer relation to the idea which we ought to conceive of St. Paul : represent to yourself a man *bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus,* Gal. vi. 17. And beholding that Jesus in the bosom of the Father: represent to yourself that man giving way to unrestrained effusions of love, embracing his Saviour, clinging to his feet, passing, in such sacred transports of delight, a time which glides away, undoubtedly, with rapidity of which we have no conception, and which enables the soul to comprehend how, in the enjoyment of perfect bliss, a thousand years fly away with the velocity of one day : represent to yourself that man suddenly recalled to this valley of tears, beholding that *third heaven,* those archangels, that God, that Jesus, all, all disappearing. Ah, my brethren, what regret must such a man have felt! What holy impatience to recover the vision of all those magnificent objects! What is become of so much felicity, of so much glory? Was I made to possess them, then, only to have the pain of losing them again! Did God indulge me with the beatific vision only to give me a deeper sense of my misery? O moment too fleeting and transitory, and have you fled never to be recalled! Raptures, transports, extasies, have you left me for ever!

My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, 2 Kings ii. 12. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Psa. xlii. 1, 2. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God . . . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee! thine altars, thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my king, and my God!* Psa. lxxxiv. 1, &c.

My God, wherefore enjoy we not at this day such privileges, that we also might be filled with such sentiments! Boundless abysses, which separate between heaven and earth, why are ye not, for a season, filled up to us, as ye were to this apostle! Ye torrents of endless delight, wherefore roll ye not to us, some of your precious rills, that they may teach us a holy contempt for those treacherous joys which deceive and ensare us!

My brethren, if, ceasing from the desire of manifestations which we have not, we could learn to avail ourselves of those which God has been pleased to bestow! were we but disposed to listen to the information which the scriptures communicate, respecting the heavenly felicity! If we would but examine the proofs, the demonstrations which we have of eternal blessedness! If we but knew how to feed on those ideas, and frequently to oppose them to those voids, to those nothings, which are the great object of our pursuit! If we would but compare them with the excellent nature of our souls, and with the dignity of our origin! then we should become like St. Paul. Then nothing would be able to damp our zeal. The end of the course

would then employ every wish, every desire of the heart. Then no dexterity of management would be needful, to introduce a discourse on the subject of death. Then we should rejoice in those who might say to us: *Let us go up to Jerusalem.* Then we should reply, *our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!* Psa. cxxii. 2. Then we should see that fervor, that zeal, that transports, are the virtues, and the attainment of the dying.

You would wish to be partakers of St. Paul's rapture to the *third heaven;* but if this privilege be denied you to its full extent, nothing forbids your aspiring after one part of it at least. When was it that St. Paul was caught up into Paradise? You have been told, it was when engaged in prayer. *While I prayed in the temple,* says he, *I was in a trance,* Acts xxii. 17. The word *trance* or *extasy* is of no indeterminate meaning. A man in an extasy is one whose soul is so entirely devoted to an object, that he is, in some sense, out of his own body, and no longer perceives what passes in it. Persons addicted to a scientific research, have been known so entirely absorbed in thought, as to be in a manner insensible during those moments of intense application. *Extasy,* in religion, is that undivided attention which attaches the mind to heavenly objects. If any thing is capable of producing this effect, it is prayer. It is by no means astonishing that a man who has *entered into his closet, and shut the door,* Matt. vi. 6. who has excluded the world, who has lost sight of every terrestrial object, whose soul is concentrated, and lost in God, if I may use the expression, that such a man should be so penetrated with admiration, with love, with hope, with joy, as to become like one rapt in an extasy.

But farther. It is in the exercise of prayer that God is pleased to communicate himself to us in the most intimate manner. It is in the exercise of prayer that he unites himself to us in the tenderest manner. It is in the exercise of prayer, that distinguished saints obtain those signal marks of favor, which are the object of our most ardent desire. A man who prays: a man whose prayer is employed about detachment from sensible things: a man who blushes, in secret, at the thought of being so swallowed up of sensible things, and so little enamored of divine excellencies: a man who asks of God, to be blessed with a glimpse of his glory, and with a foretaste of the felicity laid up in store for him, and that he would fortify his soul against the difficulties and dangers of his career: such a man may expect to be, as it were, rapt in an extasy, either by the natural effect of prayer, or by the extraordinary communications which God is pleased to vouchsafe to those who call upon his name.

From this source proceeds that earnest longing *to depart*, such as Paul expressed; hence that delightful recollection of the pleasure enjoyed in those devout exercises; pleasure that has rendered the soul insensible to the empty delights of this world: hence the idea of those blessed moments which occupy the mind for *fourteen years* together, and which produces, at the hour of death, a fervor not liable to suspicion: for, my brethren, there is a fervor which I am disposed to suspect. I acknowledge that when I see a man who has, all his life long, stagnated in the world, affecting, at the hour of death, to assume the language of eminent saints, and to say, *I have a desire to depart: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;*

becoming, all at once, a seraph, burning with zeal, I acknowledge myself to be always under an apprehension, that this zeal derives its birth from some mechanical play, or to the unaccountable duty which the sick impose upon themselves, even such of them as are most steadily attached to the earth, of declaring that they feel an earnest desire to leave it. But a man who through life has been busied about eternity, whose leading aim was to secure a happy eternity; who has, as it were, anticipated the pleasures of eternity, by habits of devotion; a man who has been absorbed of those ideas, who has fed upon them; a man who, having devoted a whole life to those sacred employments, observes the approach of death with joy, meets it with ardent desire, zeal, transport, such a man displays nothing to excite suspicion.

And is not such a state worthy of being envied? This is the manner of death which I ask of thee, O my God, when, after having served thee in the sanctuary, like the high priest of old, thou shalt be pleased, of thy great mercy, to admit me into the holy of holies. This is the manner of death which I wish to all of you, my beloved hearers. God grant that each of you may be enabled powerfully to inculcate upon his own mind, this great principle of religion, that there is a *third heaven*, a *Paradise*, a world of bliss over our heads! God grant that each of you may attain the lively persuasion, that this is the only desirable felicity, the only felicity worthy of God to bestow, and of man to receive! God grant that each of you, in meditation, in prayer, in those happy moments of the Christian life, in which God communicates himself so intimately to his creatures, may enjoy the foretastes of that felicity; and thus, instead of

fearing that death, which is to put you in possession of so many blessings, you may contemplate it with holy joy, and say, "This is the auspicious moment which I have so long wished for, which my soul has been panting after, which has been the burden of so many fervent prayers: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*" May God in mercy grant it to us all. To him be honor and glory for ever. Amen

SERMON IX.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.*

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THROUGH what favor of indulgent heaven, does this church nourish in its bosom members sufficient to furnish out the solemnity of this day, and to compose an assembly so numerous and respectable? Through what distinguished goodness is it, that you find yourselves with your children, with your friends, with your fellow-citizens; no, not all of them, for the mourning weeds with which some of you are cloathed, plainly indicate, that death has robbed us, in part, of some of them, in the course of the year which is just terminated. But through what distinguishing goodness is it, that you find yourselves with your children, with your friends, with your fellow-citizens, collected together in this sacred place?

The preachers who filled the spot which I have

* Delivered in the church of Rotterdam, on New-Year's day, 1727.

now the honor to occupy, and whose voice resounded through this temple at the commencement of the last year, derived, from the inexhaustible fund of human frailty and infirmity, motives upon motives to excite apprehension that you might not behold the end of it. They represented to you the fragility of the organs of your body, which the slightest shock is able to derange and to destroy; the dismal accidents by which the life of man is incessantly threatened; the maladies without number which are either entailed on us by the law of our nature, or which are the fruit of our intemperance; the uncertainty of human existence, and the narrow bounds to which life, at the longest, is contracted.

After having filled their mouths with arguments drawn from the stores of nature, they had recourse to those of religion. They spake to you of the limited extent of the patience and long-suffering of God. They told you that to each of us is assigned only a certain number of days of visitation. They thundered in your ears such warnings as these: *Gather yourselves together, yea gather together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth . . . . before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you*, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. *I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people: I will not again pass by them any more*, Amos viii. 8: *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*, Jonah iii. 4.

How is it possible that we should have escaped, at the same time, the miseries of nature, and the fearful threatenings of religion? And, to repeat my question once more, through what favor of indulgent heaven does this church nourish in its bosom members sufficient to furnish out the solemnity of this day, and to compose an assembly so numerous and respectable?

It is to be presumed, my brethren, that the principle which has prevented our improvement of the innumerable benefits with which a gracious Providence is loading us, prevents not our knowledge of the source from which they flow. It is to be presumed, that the first emotions of our hearts, when we, this morning, opened our eyes to behold the light, have been such as formerly animated holy men of God, when they cried aloud, amidst the residue of those whom the love of God had delivered from the plagues inflicted by his justice, in the days of vengeance: *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not: they are new every morning*, Lam. iii. 22, 23. *Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah*, Isa. i. 9.

Wo! Wo! Anathema upon anathema! be to him who shall dare henceforth to abuse . . . . . But no, let us not fulminate curses. Let not sounds so dreadful affright the ears of an audience like this. Let us adopt a language more congenial to the present day. We come to beseech you, my beloved brethren, by those very mercies of God to which you are indebted for exemption from so many evils, and for the enjoyment of so many blessings; by those very mercies which have this day opened for your admission, the gates of this temple, instead of sending you down into the prison of the tomb; by those very mercies, by which you were, within these few days, invited to the table of the Eucharist, instead of being summoned to the tribunal of judgment; by these tender mercies we beseech you to assume sentiments, and to form plans of conduct, which may have something

like a correspondence to what God has been pleased to do in your behalf.

And thou, God Almighty, the Sovereign, the Searcher of all hearts! thou who movest and directest them which way soever thou wilt! vouchsafe, Almighty God, to open to us the hearts of all this assembly, that they may yield to the entreaties which we address to them in thy name, as thou hast been thyself propitious to the prayers which they have presented to thee. Thou hast reduced *the measure of our days to an hand breadth*, Psa. xxxix. 5. and the meanest of our natural faculties is sufficient to make the enumeration of them: but *so to number our days as that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*, we cannot successfully attempt without thy all-powerful aid—*Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Amen.

In order to a clear comprehension of the words of my text, it would be necessary for me to have it in my power precisely to indicate who is the author of them, and on what occasion they were composed. The Psalm from which they are taken, bears this inscription: *A prayer of Moses, the man of God.* But who was this *Moses?* And on the supposition that the great legislator of the Jews is the person meant, did he actually compose it? Or do the words of the superscription, *A prayer of Moses, the man of God*, amount only to this, that some one has imitated his style, and, in some measure, caught his spirit in this composition? This is a point not easily to be decided, and which indeed does not admit of complete demonstration.

The opinion most venerable from its antiquity, and the most generally adopted, is, that this Psalm was composed by the Jewish Lawgiver, at one of the most melancholy conjunctures of his life, when

after the murmuring of the Israelites, on occasion of the report of the spies, God pronounced this tremendous decree: *As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord . . . . your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number . . . . shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein,* Numb. xiv. 21, 29, 30.

If this conjecture be as well-founded as it is probable, the prayer under review is the production of a heart as deeply affected with grief, as it is possible to be, without sinking into despair. Never did Moses feel himself reduced to such a dreadful extremity, as at this fatal period. It appeared as if there had been a concert between God and Israel to put his constancy to the last trial. On the one hand, the Israelites wanted to make him responsible for all that was rough and displeasing, in the paths through which God was pleased to lead them; and it seemed as if God, on the other hand, would likewise hold him responsible for the complicated rebellions of Israel.

Moses opposes to this just displeasure of God, a buckler which he had often employed with success; namely, prayer. That which he put up, on this occasion, was one of the most fervant that can be imagined. But there are situations in which all the fervor, of even the most powerful intercessor, is wholly unavailing. There are seasons when, *though Moses and Samuel stood up before God,* Jer. xv. 1. to request him to spare a nation, the measure of whose iniquity was come to the full, they would request in vain. In such a situation was Moses now placed. Represent to yourselves the deplorable condition of the Israelites, and the feelings of that man, whose leading character was

meekness; and who, if we may be allowed the expression, carried that rebellious people in the tenderest and most sensible part of his soul: to be excluded from all hope beyond thirty or forty years of life, and to be condemned to pass these in a desert; what a fearful destiny!

What course does Moses take? Dismissed, so to speak, banished from the throne of grace, does he however give all up for lost? No, my brethren. He was unable by intreaty to procure a revocation of the sentence pronounced against persons so very dear to him, he limits himself to imploring, in their behalf, wisdom to make a proper use of it. "Thou hast sworn it, Great God; and the oath, which thy adorable lips have pronounced against us, can never be recalled. Thou hast sworn that none of us, who came out of Egypt, shall enter into that land, the object of all our hopes and prayers. Thou hast sworn that die we must, after having lingered out, for forty years, a miserable existence in this wilderness, a habitation fitter for ferocious beasts of prey, than for reasonable creatures, than for men whom thou hast chosen, and called thy people. The sighs which my soul has breathed to heaven, for a remission, are unavailing; the tears which I have shed in thy bosom, have been shed in vain; these hands, once powerful to the combat, these hands which were stronger than thee in battle, these hands against which thou couldst not hold out, which made thee say, *let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*, Exod. xxxii. 10: these hands have lost the blessed art of prevailing with God in the conflict! Well, be it so. Let us die, great God, seeing it is thy sovereign will! Let us serve as victims to thy too just indignation; reduce our life to the shortest standard. But at least, since we had

not the wisdom to avail ourselves of the promises of a long and happy life, teach us to live as becomes persons who are to die so soon. *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*"

This is a general idea of the end which our text has in view. But let us enter somewhat more deeply into this interesting subject. Let us make application of it to our own life, which bears a resemblance so striking to that which the children of Israel were doomed to pass in the wilderness. We are to enquire,

I. What is implied in numbering our days?

II. What are the conclusions which wisdom deduces from that enumeration?

I. In order to make a just estimate of our days, let us reckon, 1. Those days, or divisions of time, in which we feel neither good nor evil, neither joy nor grief, and in which we practice neither virtue nor vice, and which for this reason, I call *days of nothingness;* let us reckon these, and compare them with the *days of reality.* 2. Let us reckon the *days of adversity,* and compare them with the *days of prosperity.* 3. Let us reckon the *days of languor and weariness,* and compare them with the *days of delight and pleasure.* 4. Let us reckon the *days* which we have *devoted to the world,* and compare them with the *days* which we have *devoted to religion.* 5. Finally, let us calculate the amount of the whole, that we may discover how long the duration of a life is consisting of days of *nothingness* and of *reality;* of days of *prosperity* and of *adversity;* of days of *pleasure* and of *languor;*

days *devoted* to the *world*, and to the *salvation of the soul*.

1. Let us reckon the days of *nothingness*, and compare them with the days of *reality*. I give the appellation of *days of nothingness* to all that portion of our life in which, as I said, we feel neither good nor evil, neither joy nor grief, in which we practice neither virtue nor vice, and which is a mere nothing with respect to us.

In this class must be ranked, all those hours which human infirmity lays us under the necessity of passing in sleep, and which run away with a third part of our life: time, during which we are stretched in a species of tomb, and undergo, as it were, an anticipated death. Happy, at the same time, in being able, in a death not immediately followed by the judgment of God, to bury, in some measure, our troubles together with our life!

In this class must be farther ranked those seasons of inaction, and of distraction, in which all the faculties of our souls are suspended, during which we propose no kind of object to thought, during which we cease, in some sense, to be thinking beings; seasons which afford an objection, of no easy solution, to the opinion of those who maintain, that actual thought is essential to mind; and that from this very consideration, that it subsists, it must actually think.

In this class must be farther ranked, all those portions of time which are a burden to us; not because we are under the pressure of some calamity, for this will fall to be considered under another head, but because they form, if I may say so, a wall between us and certain events which we ardently wish to attain. Such as when we are in a state of uncertainty respecting certain questions, in which we feel ourselves deeply interested, but

which must remain undecided for some days, for some years. We could wish to suppress all those intervals of our existence, were God to put it in our power. Thus, a child wishes to attain, in a moment, the age of youth; the young man would hasten at once into the condition of the master of a family; and sometimes the father of a family would rush forward to the period when he should see the beloved objects of his affection settled in the world: and so of other cases.

In this class we may still rank certain seasons of preparation and design; such as the time which we spend in dressing and undressing, upon the road, and in other similar occupations, insipid and useless in themselves, and to which no importance attaches, but in so far as they are the means necessary of attaining an object more interesting than themselves.

Reckon, if you can, what is the amount of this first class of your days; compare them with what we have called *days of reality*. Whoever will take the trouble to make such a calculation with any degree of exactness, must be constrained to acknowledge, that a man who says he has lived threescore years, has not lived twenty complete: because though he has, in truth, passed threescore years in the world, forty of these stole away in littleness and inaction, and during this period he was, as if he had not been. This is the first enumeration, the enumeration of *days of nothingness* compared with *days of reality*.

2. Let us reckon the *days of adversity*, and compare them with the *days of prosperity*. To what a scanty measure would human life be reduced, were we to subtract from it those seasons of bitterness of soul, which God seems to have ap-

pointed to us, rather to furnish an exercise to our patience, than to make us taste the pleasures of living.

What is life to a man, who feels himself condemned to live in a state of perpetual separation from persons who are dear to him? Collect in one and the same house, honors, riches, dignities; let the tables be loaded with a profusion of dainties; display the most magnificent furniture; let all that is exquisite in music be provided; let every human delight contribute its aid: all that is necessary to render all these delights insipid and disgusting, is the absence of one beloved object, say a darling child.

What is life to a man who has become infamous, to a man who is execrated by his fellow-creatures, who dares not appear in public, lest his ears should be stunned with the voice of malediction, thundering in every direction upon his head?

What is life to a man deprived of health; a man delivered over to the physicians; a man reduced to exist mechanically, who is nourished by merely studied aliments, who digests only according to the rules of art, who is able to support a dying life only by the application of remedies still more disgusting than the very maladies which they are called in to relieve?

What is life to a man arrived at the age of decrepitude, who feels his faculties decaying day by day, when he perceives himself becoming an object of pity and forbearance to all around him, or rather, becoming absolutely insupportable to every one; when he imagines he hears himself continually reproached with being an encumbrance on the face of the earth, and that he is occupying, too long, a place which he ought to resign, to one who might be more useful to society?

But this is not the worst of the case. Nothing more is necessary, in many cases, than a whim, a mere chimera, to disturb the happiest, and most splendid condition of human life.

Now, in which of our days shall we find those pure joys, which no infusion of bitterness has poisoned? In which of our days is it possible for us to behold the perfect harmony of glory in the state, of triumph in the church, of vigorous health, of prosperous fortune, of domestic peace, of mental tranquillity? In which of the days of our life did this concurrence of felicities permit us to consider ourselves as really happy?

Farther, if, in the ordinary current of our days, we had been deprived of only a few of the good things of life, while we possessed all the rest, the great number of those which we enjoyed, might minister consolation under the want of those which Providence had been pleased to withhold. But how often would an almost total destitution of good, and an accumulation of wo, render life insupportable, did not submission to the will of God, or rather, did not divine aid enable us to bear the ill of life?

Shall I have your permission, my brethren, to go into a detail of particulars on this head? For my own part, who have been in this world during a period not much longer than that which the children of Israel passed in the wilderness, I have scarcely heard any thing else spoken of, except disasters, desolations, destructive revolutions. Scarcely had I begun to know this church, into which I had been admitted in baptism, when I was doomed to be the melancholy spectator of the most calamitous events which can be presented to the eyes, or to the imagination of man. Have you forgotten them, my dear compatriots, my beloved companions in af-

fliction, have you forgotten those days of darkness? Have you forgotten those cries of the children of Edom: *Raise it, raise it, even to the foundation thereof*, Psa. cxxxvii. 7? Have you forgotten those *dead bodies* of our brethren, *given to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of the saints unto the beasts of the earth; their blood shed like water round about Jerusalem, and none to bury them*, Psa. lxxix. 2, 3?

In order to escape calamities so many and so grievous, we were reduced to the necessity of fleeing from the place of our birth. We were constrained to drag about, from place to place, a miserable life, empoisoned by the fatal shafts which had pierced us. We were constrained to present objects of compassion, but often importunately troublesome, to the nations whither we fled in quest of a place of refuge. We were reduced to the misery of being incessantly haunted with the apprehension of failing in the supplies necessary to the most pressing demands of life, and to those of education, as dear as even the support of life.

Scarcely did we find ourselves under covert from the tempest, when we felt that we were still exposed to it, in the persons of those with whom we were united in the tenderest bonds. *One post run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another:* to adopt the prophet's expression, Jer. li. 31. to announce dismal tidings. Sometimes the message bore, that a house had been recently demolished: sometimes that a church had just been sapped to the foundation: sometimes we heard the affecting history of an undaunted believer, but whose intrepidity had exposed him to the most cruel torments; at another time, it was to a faint-hearted Christian, whom timidity had betrayed unto apostacy, a thousand times more to be de-

plored than tortures and death in their most horrid form.

Received into countries whose charity extended their arms to embrace us, it seemed as if we carried wherever we went, a part of those disasters from which we were striving to make our escape. For these forty years past, my brethren, what repose has Protestant Europe enjoyed? One war has succeeded to another war, one plague to another plague, one abyss to another abyss. And God knows, God only knows, whether the calamities which have for some time pressed these states around on every side; God only knows whether or not they are to be but *the beginning of sorrows!* God only knows what may be preparing for us, by that avenging arm which is ever lifted up against us, and that flaming sword, whose tremendous glare is incessantly dazzling our eyes! God only knows how long our bulwarks against the ocean may be able to withstand those formidable shocks, and those violent storms, which an insulted God is exciting to shatter them! God knows . . . . but let us not presume to draw aside the veil under which Providence has been pleased to conceal the destiny of these Provinces from our eyes. It is abundantly evident, that were we to subtract from the number of our days, those heavy periods of existence, when we live only to suffer: were we to reckon the days of prosperity alone, our life would be reduced to an imperceptible duration; we should not discover any exaggeration in the expressions which Moses employs to trace the image of the life of the Israelites, in the preceding context: *Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return ye children of men: thou carriest them away, as with a flood: they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*

In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

3. Let us reckon the *days of languor and weariness*, and compare them with the *days of delight and pleasure*. This particular must not be confounded with the preceding. There is a wide difference between the days which we have called those of *adversity*, and which we, under this head, call days of *languor and weariness*. By days of *adversity*, we meant those seasons of life, in which the privation of some worldly good, and the concurrence of many evils, render us actually miserable. By days of *languor and weariness*, we now mean those in which exemption from the ill of life, or the possession of its good things, leaves the mind void and dissatisfied.

Let each of us here recollect the history of his own life. How often has a man found himself a prey to languor and disgust, in the midst of those very pleasures of life, which he had conceived to be the most lively and affecting? Objects in which we generally take the greatest delight, sometimes depress us into the most intolerable languor. It is frequently sufficient for exciting distate in us to an object, that we once doated on it: to such a degree is the will of man capricious, fluctuating, and inconstant. Parties of pleasure are sometimes proposed and formed: the place, the time, the company, every thing is settled with the most solicitous anxiety; the hour is looked to with the most eager impatience. The day arrives at last, the golden moment of bliss, and nothing less is found than what the fond imagination had promised to itself. It is a mere phantom which had an appearance of solidity, when viewed at a distance: we approach, we embrace it, and lo, it melts away into air, "thin air."

The believer, whose taste is purified, is undoubtedly better acquainted with this languor, when, amidst the pleasures of this world, there occurs to his mind, one or another of the reflections which have been suggested, respecting the vanity of all human things: when he says to himself: "Not one in this social circle, among whom I am partaking of so many delights, but would basely abandon me, if I stood in need of his assistance, did the happiness of my life impose on him the sacrifice of one of the dishes of his table, of one of the horses of his equipage, of one of the trees of his gardens." When stating a comparison between the tide of pleasure into which he was going to plunge, and those which religion has procured him, he thus reflects: "This is not the joy which I taste when, alone with my God, I pour out before him a soul inflamed to rapture with his love, and when I collect, in rich profusion, the tokens of his grace." When coming to perceive that he has indulged rather too far in social mirth, which is lawful only when restrained within certain bounds, he says within himself: "Are such objects worthy of the regard of an immortal soul; are these my divinities?" Then it is he feels himself oppressed with languor and disgust. Then it is that objects once so eagerly desired, are regarded with coldness or aversion. Hence that seriousness which overspreads his countenance; hence that pensive silence into which he falls in spite of every effort to the contrary; hence certain gloomy reflections which involuntarily arise in his soul.

But this languor is not peculiar to those whose taste piety has refined. There is a remarkable difference, however, in this respect, between the men of the world, and believers; namely, that the disgust which these last feel in the pleasures of life,

engages them in the pursuit of purer joys, in exercises of devotion: whereas the others give up the pursuit of one worldly delight, only to hunt after a new one, equally empty and unsatisfying with that which they had renounced. From that scanty portion of life, in which we enjoy prosperity, we must go on to subtract that other portion, in which prosperity is insipid to us. Calculate, if you can, the poor amount of what remains after this subtraction.

4. Let us reckon the *days* which we have *devoted to the world*, and compare them with *those* which we have *devoted to religion*. Humiliating computation! But I take it for granted, that in your present circumstances, it has been rendered familiar to your thoughts. Christians who have been just concluding the year with a participation of the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, could hardly fail to have put this question to their consciences, when employed in self-examination, preparatory to that solemn service: *What proportion of my time has been given to God? What proportion of it has been given to the world?* And it is sufficient barely to propose the discussion of these questions, to come to this melancholy conclusion: That the portion of our life, which alone deserves to be considered as containing something solid and substantial, I mean the portion which has been given to God, is of a duration so short, as to be almost imperceptible, when compared with the years which the world has engrossed.

5. I proceed to the last computation proposed. What is the amount of this total of human life, which we have thus arranged in different columns? What is the sum of this compound accompt of days of *nothingness* and days of *reality;* of days of *prosperity* and days of *affliction;* of days of *lan-*

guor and days of *delight;* of days *devoted to the world,* and *days devoted to religion?* My brethren, it is God, it is God alone, who holds *our time in his hand,* to adopt the idea of the prophet, Psa. xxxi. 15: he alone can make an accurate calculation of them. And as he alone has fixed the term of our life, he only is likewise capable of knowing it. It is not absolutely impossible, however, to ascertain what shall be, in respect of time, the temporal destination of those who hear me this day. Let me suppose that the present solemnity has drawn together an assembly of eighteen hundred persons. I subdivide these 1800 into six different classes.

The 1st. consisting of persons from 10 to 20 years of age, amounting to		530
2d. from	20 to 30, amounting to	440
3d.	30 to 40	345
4th.	40 to 50	205
5th.	50 to 60	160
6th.	60 and upwards	70
		1800

According to the most exact calculation, of those who have made such kind of researches their study, each of these classes must, in the course of this year, present to death, a tribute of ten persons. On this computation, sixty of my present hearers must, before the beginning of another year, be numbered with the dead. Conformably to the same rate of computation, in ten years, of the 1800 now present, there will remain 1270

In 20 years	only	830
In 30		480
In 40		130

In 50 years no more will be left than 70

Thus you see, my brethren, in what a perpetual flux the human race is. The world is a vast theatre, in which every one appears his moment upon the stage, and in a moment disappears. Every successive instant presents different scenery, a new decoration. I represent these vicissitudes to myself, under the emblem of what is felt by a man, who is employed in turning over the pages of history. He pores over his book, he beholds on this leaf one people, one king: he turns it, and lo, other laws, other maxims, other actors, which have no manner of relation to what preceded them!

SERMON IX.

PART II.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

WE have seen to what a measure human life is reduced. To be made sensible of this is a very high attainment in knowledge; but it is of still higher importance, thence to deduce conclusions, which have a tendency to regulate the workings of your mind, the emotions of your heart, the conduct of your life: and to assist you in this, is,

II. The second object which we proposed to ourselves in this discourse. This is what the prophet asks of God in the text: this we would earnestly implore in your behalf, and this prayer we wish you to adopt for yourselves: *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

1. The first conclusion, deducible from the re-

presentation given, is this: the vanity of the life which now is, affords the clearest proof of the life to come. This proof is sensible, and it possesses two advantages over all those which philosophy supplies, toward demonstrating the immortality of the soul. The proof of our immortality, taken from the spirituality of the soul, has, perhaps, a great deal of solidity; but it is neither so sensible, nor so incontestable. I am lost when I attempt to carry my metaphysical speculations into the interior of substances. I do not well know what to reply to an opponent who presses me with such questions as these: "Do you know every thing that a substance is capable of? Are your intellectual powers such as to qualify you to pronounce this decision: *Such a substance is capable only of this, and such another only of that.*" This difficulty, at least, always recurs, namely, that a soul, spiritual and immortal of its own nature, may be deprived of immortality, should it please that God who called it into existence, to reduce it to a state of annihilation.

But the proof which we have alleged is sensible, it is incontestable. I can make the force of it to be felt by a peasant, by an artisan, by the dullest of human beings. And I am bold enough to bid defiance to the acutest genius, to the most dexterous sophist, to advance any thing that deserves the name of reasoning in contradiction to it. How! is it possible that this soul capable of reflecting, of reasoning, of laying down principles, of deducing consequences, of knowing its Creator, and of serving him, should have been created for the purpose merely of acting the poor part which man fills on the earth? How! the souls of those myriads of infants, who die before they are born, to be annihilated, after having animated, for a few months,

an embryo, a mass of unfinished organs, which nature did not deign to carry on to perfection! How! The Abrahams, the Moseses, the Davids, and the multitudes of those other holy men, to whom God made so many and such gracious promises, shall they cease to be, after having been *strangers and pilgrims upon the earth?* How! that *cloud of witnesses*, who, rather than deny the truth, submitted to be *stoned*, to be *sawn asunder*, to be *tempted*, to be *slain with the sword*, who *wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented*, Heb. xi. 13, 37? How! that *cloud of witnesses* evaporate into smoke, and the souls of martyrs pass into annihilation amidst the torture inflicted by an executioner! Ye confessors of Jesus Christ, who have borne his reproach for thirty years together, who have yielded up your back to the rod of a tormentor, who have lived a life more painful than death in its most horrid form! You to have no other reward of all your labors and sufferings, except those poor gratuities which man bestows after you have finished your career? How! those noble faculties of soul bestowed on man, merely to sit, for a few years upon a tribunal, for a few years to dip into arts and sciences? . . . . What brain could digest the thought! What subtility of metaphysical research, what ingeniousness of sophistry, can enfeeble the proof derived from such appearances as these? O brevity of the present economy! O vanity of human life! O miseries upon miseries, with which my days are depressed, distracted, empoisoned, I will complain of you no longer! I behold light the most cheering, the most transporting, ready to burst forth from the bosom of that gloomy night into which you have plunged me! you conduct me to the grand, the animating doc-

trine of immortality! The vanity of the present life, is the proof of the life which is to come. This is our first conclusion.

2. The second conclusion we deduce is this: neither the good things, nor the evil, of a life which passes away with so much rapidity, ought to make a very deep impression on a soul whose duration is eternal. Do not tax me of extravagance. I have no intention to preach a hyperbolical morality. I do not mean to maintain such a wild position as this, "That there is no reality in either the enjoyments or the distresses of life: that there is a mixture in every human condition, which reduces all to equality: that the man who sits at a plentiful table is not a whit happier than the man who begs his bread." This is not our gospel. Temporal evils are unquestionably real. Were this life of very long duration, I would deem the condition of the rich man incomparably preferable to that of the poor; that of the man who commands, to that of him who obeys; that of one who enjoys perfect health, to that of one who is stretched on a bed of languishing. But however real the enjoyments and the distresses of life may be in themselves, their transient duration invalidates that reality. You, who have passed thirty years in affliction! there, are thirty years of painful existence vanished away. You, whose woes have been lengthened out to forty years! There, are forty years of a life of sorrow vanished away. And you who, for these thirty, forty, fifty years past, have been living at ease, and drowned in pleasure! What is become of those years? The time which both the one and the other has yet to live, is scarcely worth the reckoning, and is flying away with the same rapidity. If the brevity of life does not render all conditions equal, it fills up, at least, the greatest

part of that abyss which cupidity had placed between them. Let us reform our ideas: let us correct our style: do not let us call a man happy because he is in health: do not let us call a sick man miserable: let us not call that absolute felicity, which is only borrowed, transitory, ready to flee away with life itself. Immortal beings ought to make immortality the standard by which to regulate their ideas of happiness and misery. Neither the good things, nor the evil, of a life so transient, ought to make a very deep impression on a soul whose duration is eternal. This was our second conclusion.

3. But if I be immortal, what have I to do among the dying? If I be destined to a never ending duration, wherefore am I doomed to drag out a miserable life upon the earth? If the blessings and the miseries of this life are so disproportionate to my natural greatness, wherefore have they been given to me? Wherefore does the Creator take a kind of pleasure in laying snares for my innocence, in presenting to me delights which may become the source of everlasting misery; and by conducting me to eternal felicity, through the sacrifice of every present comfort? This difficulty, my brethren, this pressing difficulty, leads us to,

A third conclusion: this life is a season of probation, assigned to us for the purpose of making our choice between everlasting happiness or misery. This life, considered as it is in itself, is an object of contempt. We may say of it, with the sacred writers, that it is a *shadow that passeth away; a vanity,* which has nothing real or solid; *a flower which fadeth; grass* which withereth and is cut down; *a vapor* which dissolves into air; *a dream* which leaves no trace after the sleep is gone; *a*

thought which presents itself to the mind, but abideth not; *an apparition, a nothing* before God.

But when we contemplate this life, in its relation to the great end which God proposes to himself, in bestowing it upon us, let us form exalted ideas of it. Let us carefully compute all its subdivisions; let us husband, with scrupulous attention, all the instants of it, even the most minute and imperceptible; let us regret the precious moments which we have irrecoverably lost. For this *shadow* which passeth, this *vanity* which has nothing real and solid, this *flower* which fadeth, this *grass* which is cut down and withereth, this *vapor* which melteth into air, this forgotten *dream*, this transient *thought*, this *apparition* destitute of body and substance, this *nothing*, this *span* of life, so vile and contemptible, is *time* which we must *redeem*, Eph. v. 16. *a time of visitation* which we must know, Luke xix. 44: *a time accepted, a day of salvation* which we must improve, 2 Cor. vi. 2; a period of *forbearance, and long-suffering*, which we must embrace, Rom. ii. 4. a time beyond which *there shall be time no longer*, Rev. x. 6. because after life is finished, tears are unavailing, sighs are impotent, prayers are disregarded, and repentance is ineffectual. We proceed to deduce a

4. Fourth conclusion: a life through which more time has been devoted to the present world, than to preparation for eternity, corresponds not to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, when he placed us in this economy of expectation. We were placed in this state of probation, not to sleep, to eat, and to drink; we were placed here to prepare for eternity; if at least, we have not adapted these functions to the leading object of eternity; if we have not been governed by that maxim of St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 31: *Whether ye eat or drink, or*

whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, we certainly have not conformed to the ideas which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial.

We were placed in this state of probation, not merely to labor for the provision and establishment of our families; we were placed here to prepare for eternity. If, therefore, we have devoted more of our time and attention to the provision and establishment of our families, than to preparation for eternity; if, at least, we have not adapted, to the leading object of eternity, our solicitude and exertions in behalf of our families, we certainly have not conformed to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial.

We were placed in this state of probation, not merely to govern states, to cultivate arts and sciences; we are placed here to prepare for eternity. If, therefore, we have not directed all our anxieties and exertions, on such subjects as these, to the leading object of eternity, we certainly have not conformed to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, in placing us under this economy of expectation and trial. Imagine not that we shall be judged according to the ideas which we ourselves are pleased to form of our vocation. We are under an economy of expectation and trial: time, then, is given us, that we may prepare for eternity. A life, therefore, through which more time and attention have been devoted to the pursuits of this world, than to preparation for eternity, corresponds not to the views which the Creator proposed to himself, when he placed us under this economy of expectation and trial. This is our fourth conclusion.

5. We go on to deduce a fifth: a sinner who

has not conformed to the views which God proposed to himself, in placing him under an economy of discipline and probation, ought to pour out his soul in thanksgiving, that God is graciously pleased still to lengthen it out. Let each of you who, on taking a review of his own life, must bear the dreadful testimony against himself, that he has most miserably deviated from the views of his Creator, present to God, this day, a heart overflowing with gratitude, that this tremendous sentence has not yet been pronounced against him: *give an account of thy stewardship*, Luke xvi. 2. It is for this that life ought to be prized as infinitely dear; for this we have unspeakable cause to rejoice, that we still behold the light of this day.

"I have been in the world these thirty, forty, threescore years; and ever since I arrived at the exercise of reason, and felt the power of conscience, I have enjoyed every advantage toward attaining the knowledge, and exhibiting the practice of religion. Every display of mercy, and every token of fatherly displeasure, have been employed to reclaim me. Not a book written to convince the understanding, but what has been put into my hands; not a sermon calculated to move and to melt the heart, but what has been addressed to my ears. My corruption has proved too powerful for them all. My life has been a tissue, if not of enormous crimes, at least of dissipation and thoughtlessness. If at any time I have shaken off my habits of listlessness and inaction, it was, usually, only to run into excesses, which have already precipitated so many precious souls into hell. When visited with sickness, when death seemed to stare me in the face, I seemed to behold, collected into one fatal moment, all the sins of my life, and all the dreadful punishments which they deserve. I

carried a hell within me; I believed myself to be encompassed by demons and flames of fire; I became my own executioner, when I called to remembrance that wretched time which I had lavished on the world and its lying vanities; and I would have sacrificed my life a thousand and a thousand times to redeem it, had God put it in my power; I would have given the whole world to bring back but one poor moment of that precious time which I had so prodigally squandered away: and God, in mercy ineffable, is still prolonging that day of visitation."

6. Finally, we farther deduce a sixth conclusion: Creatures in whose favor God is pleased still to lengthen out the day of grace, the economy of long-suffering, which they have improved to so little purpose, ought no longer to delay, no not for a moment, to avail themselves of a reprieve so graciously intended. Creatures who stand on the brink of the grave, and who have too just ground to fear that they should be thrust into hell, were the grave immediately to swallow them up, ought instantly to form a new plan of life, and instantly to set about the execution of it. I conjure you, my brethren, by the gospel of this day, I conjure you by all that is powerful, all that is interesting, all that is tender, in the solemnity which we are now assembled to celebrate, and in that of last Lord's day; I conjure you to enter in good earnest into the spirit of this reflection, to keep it constantly in view through every instant of the years which the patience of God may still grant you, to make it, as it were, the rule of all your designs, of all your undertakings, of all your exertions. Without this we can do nothing for you. The most ardent prayers which we could address to heaven, on your behalf, this day, would be as ineffectual

as those which Moses formerly presented in behalf of the children of Israel, to obtain a revocation of that awful doom: *I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest*, Psa. xcv. 11. But if, on the contrary, you are wise to admit the word of exhortation, we are warranted to hold up our wishes for your salvation, as so many promises sealed, with that *seal of God* which *standeth sure*, and immediately emanating from the mouth of that God, *the Lord who changeth not*.

Application.

I have embraced with avidity, my dearly beloved brethren, the opportunity of contributing to the present solemnity, to come to you at a juncture so desirable, and to bring to you the word of life, at a season, when I am at liberty to unfold to you a heart which has ever been penetrated with a respectful tenderness for this city, and for this church. Deign to accept my affectionate good wishes, with sentiments conformable to those which dictated them.

Venerable magistrates, to whose hands Providence has committed the reins of government, you are exalted to a station which our devotions contemplate with respect! But we are the ministers of a Master whose commands control the universe; and it is from the inexhaustible source of his greatness, of his riches, of his magnificence, that we draw the benedictions which we this day pronounce upon your august heads. May God vouchsafe to inspire you with that dignity of sentiment, that magnanimity, that noble ambition, which enable the sovereigns to whom he has entrusted the sword of his justice, to found on the basis of justice, all their designs, and all their decisions! May it please

God to inspire you with that charity, that condescension, that affability, which sinks the master in the father! May it please God to inspire you with that humility, that self-abasement, which engage Christian magistrates to deposit all their power at the feet of God, and to consider it as their highest glory to render unto him a faithful account of their administration! This account is a solemn one. You are, to a certain degree, responsible, not only for the temporal, but for the eternal happiness of this people. The eternal happiness of a nation frequently depends on the measures adopted by their governors, on the care which they employ to curb licentiousness, to suppress scandalous publications, to procure respect for the ordinances of religion, and to supply the church with enlightened, zealous, and faithful pastors. But magistrates who propose to themselves views of such extensive utility and importance, are warranted to expect from God, all the aid necessary to the accomplishment of them. And this aid, great God, we presume to implore, in behalf of these illustrious personages! May our voice pierce the heavens, may our prayers be crowned with an answer of peace!

Pastors, my dear companions in the great plan of salvation, ye successors of apostolic men in the *edifying of the body of Christ*, and in *the work of the ministry!* God has set very narrow bounds to what is called, in the language of the world, our advancement, and our fortune. The religion which we profess, permits us not to aspire after those proud titles, those posts of distinction, those splendid retinues, which confound the ministers of temporal princes with the ministers of that Jesus *whose kingdom is not of this world.* But whatever we lose with respect to those advantages which dazzle

the senses, is amply compensated to us in real and solid blessings; at least if we ourselves understand that religion which we make known to others, and if we have a due sense of that high vocation with which we are honored of God. May that God, who has conferred this honor upon us, vouchsafe to endow us with that illumination, and with those virtues, without which it is impossible for us to discharge the duties of it in a becoming manner! May he vouchsafe to bestow upon us that courage, that intrepidity, which are necessary to our effectually resisting the enemies of our holy reformation, nay those too, who, under the name of reformed, do their utmost to thwart and to undermine it! May he vouchsafe to support us amidst the incessant difficulties and opposition which we have to encounter through the course of our ministry, and to animate us by the idea of those supereminent degrees of glory, which await those who, after having *turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever!*

Merchants, ye who are the support of this Republic, and who maintain in the midst of us prosperity and abundance, may God vouchsafe to continue his blessing upon your commerce! May God cause the winds and the waves, nature and the elements, to unite their influence in your favor! But above all, may God vouchsafe to teach you the great art of *placing your heart there where your treasure is; to make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness:* to sanctify your prosperity by your charities, especially on a day like this, on which every one ought to prescribe to himself the law of paying an homage of charity to *God* who *is love*, and whose love has spared us to behold the light of this day!

Fathers and mothers, with whom it is so delicious for me to blend myself, under an address so deeply interesting, may God enable us to view our children, not as beings limited to a present world, but as beings endowed with an immortal soul, and formed for eternity! May it please God to impress infinitely more upon your hearts the desire of, one day, beholding them among the blessed in the kingdom of heaven, than going on and prospering on the earth! May God grant us the possession of objects so endeared, to the very close of life, objects so necessary to the enjoyment of life! May God vouchsafe, if he be pleased to take them away from us, to grant us that submission to his will, which enables us to support a calamity so severe!

My dearly beloved brethren, this reflection chokes my utterance. May God vouchsafe to hear all the wishes and prayers which my heart has conceived, and which my lips have uttered, and all those which I am constrained to suppress, and which are more in number than the tongue is able to declare! Amen.

SERMON X.

THE TRUE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

THE solemnity which, in a few days, we are going to celebrate, I mean the Ascension of Jesus Christ, displays the triumph of the cross. The Saviour of the world *ascending in a cloud*, received up into heaven, amidst the acclamations of the church triumphant, removes the offence given by the Saviour of the world *hanging on a tree*. The period of the crucifixion, I acknowledge, was precisely that in which he carried magnanimity to its most exalted pitch. Never did he appear so truly great as when *descending into the lower parts of the earth*: Eph. iv. 9: *humbled, made of no reputation, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*; Phil. ii. 7, 8: he accomplished what was most repulsive to nature, in the plan of redemption. But how difficult is it to recognize heroism, when the hero terminates his career upon a scaffold!

The darkness which overspread the mystery of the cross, is passing away; the vails, which concealed the glory of Jesus Christ begin to withdraw; heaven, which seemed to have conspired with earth and with hell, to depress and overwhelm him, declares aloud in his favor; his splendor bursts out of obscurity, and his glory from the very bosom of shame: because *he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant*; because *he humbled himself*; because *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* Phil. ii. 9, 10.

What circumstances more proper could we have selected, Christians, to induce you to seek your glory in the cross of your Saviour, than those which display it followed by so much pomp and magnificence? I am going to propose to you as a model, the man who, of all others, best understood the mystery of the cross: for my part, says he, in the words which I have read, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* Let us meditate on this subject, with all that application of thought which it so justly merits.

And thou, great High Priest, *Minister of the true tabernacle! thou holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, Heb. vii. 26. viii. 2, 1. graciously look down on this people, now combating under the banners of the cross! It is impossible for us to call to remembrance the great day of

thy exaltation, without fixing our eyes upon thee, with those blessed disciples of thine who were the witnesses of it, without following thee, as they did, with the bodily organ, and with all the powers of thought, and without crying out, *Draw us, Lord, we will run after thee:* Cant. i. 4. But in giving way to such desires, we misunderstand the nature of our vocation. We must combat as thou hast done, in order to triumph with thee. Well, be it so! *Teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:* Psal. cxliv. 1. Teach us to make thy cross a ladder, whereon to mount to thy throne. Amen.

The text which we have announced, is, as it were, a conclusion deduced from the chapters which precede it. We cannot possibly have a clear comprehension of it, without a general recollection of the whole Epistle from which it is taken. St. Paul, in writing to the Galatians, has this principally in view, to revive the spirit of Christianity, which he himself had diffused over the whole province of Galatia. Never had preacher greater success, than the ministry of our apostle was attended with, in this city of the Lesser Asia. He himself gives this honorable testimony in favor of the Galatians, in chap. iv. ver. 15. that *they had received him as an angel of God*, and which is saying still more, *even as Christ Jesus*. But the *Gauls*, of which this people was a colony, have, in all ages, been reproached with the faculty of easily taking impressions, and of losing them with equal facility. The sentiments with which St. Paul had inspired them, shared the fate of all violent sensations; that is, they were of no great duration. With this he upbraids them in the very beginning of the Epistle. *I marvel*, says he to them, chap. i. 6. *I marvel, that ye are so soon removed*

from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. Mark the expression, *removed unto another gospel.*

We are not possessed of memoirs of the first ages of the church sufficiently ample, to enable us to determine with precision, who were the authors of a revolution so deplorable. But if we may give credit to two of the earliest historians, to whom we are indebted for the most complete accounts which we have of the first heresy, I mean Philostratus and St. Epiphanius; it was Cerinthus himself, in the first instance, and his disciples afterwards, who marred the good seed which St. Paul had sown in the church of Galatia. One thing is certain, namely, that respect for the ceremonial observances which God himself had prescribed, in a manner so solemn, and particularly for the law of circumcision, was the reason, or rather the pretext, of which the adversaries of our apostle availed themselves, to destroy the fruits of his ministry, by exciting suspicions against the soundness of his doctrine. St. Paul goes to the root of the evil: he conveys just ideas of those ceremonial institutions: he demonstrates, that however venerable the origin of them might be, and whatever the wisdom displayed in their establishment, they had never been laid down as an essential part of religion, much less still, as the true means of reconciling men to God. We perceive, at first sight, this design of the apostle, in the words of my text, and through the whole Epistle, from which they are taken.

But what is, perhaps, not so easily discoverable in it, but which ought to be very carefully observed, is; that as St. Paul was maintaining his thesis against opponents of different sorts, so he likewise supports it on different principles. Three

descriptions of persons argued in favor of the *Levitical observances*. The first did so from a prejudice of birth and education. The second, from an excess of complaisance. The third, from a criminal policy.

1. A part of the Jews who had been converted to Christianity, could not help preserving a respect for the *Levitical ceremonies*, and wished to transmit the observance of them into the Christian church. These were the persons who acted from a prejudice of birth and education.

2. Some of them, more enlightened, out of complaisance to others, would have wished to retain the practice of those *rites*. In this class we find no less a person than St. Peter himself, as we learn from the second chapter of this Epistle, the eleventh and the following verses; and what is most to be regretted in the case, this apostle fell into such an excess of compliance, that he not only authorised by his example that respect which the Jews had for the *Levitical institutions*, but, being at Antioch, when certain Jews were sent thither by St. James, he pretended to break off all intercourse with the Gentile converts to Christianity, because they had not submitted to the ordinance of *circumcision*: in this he acted from an excessive and timid complaisance. This weakness of St. Peter, to mention it by the way, has been laid hold of by one of the most declared enemies of Christianity, I mean the philosopher Porphyry. The reproaches which he vents against the Christians, on this ground, appeared so galling to them, that they had recourse to a pious fraud, to defend themselves. They alleged, nay, they perhaps seriously believed, that the person thus branded with timidity, was not Peter the apostle, but one Cephas, who, as they are pleased to give out, was of the number of

the seventy disciples of Jesus Christ, mentioned in the gospel. A most chimerical supposition! which has been latterly adopted by a celebrated Jesuit *, and which has swelled the catalogue of his extravagances.

3. But if some, from prejudice, wished to transmit the *Levitical ceremonies* into Christianity, and others, from an excess of complaisance; there was still a third description of persons who did so, out of a criminal policy. Such were the pagan converts. Respecting which it is necessary to remark, that the Jewish religion was tolerated by the Roman laws; whereas the religion of Jesus Christ was prescribed by them; and Christians were thereby exposed to the most violent persecution. This it was which induced the pagan converts to conform to the *Levitical ceremonies*, that they might pass for Jews, under the veil of Judaism.

A passage of St. Jerome, to this purpose, deserves here to be inserted. "Caius Cæsar," says he, "Augustus, and Tiberius, enacted laws, by which the Jews dispersed over the Roman empire, were authorized to practice the rites of their religion, and the ceremonial institutions transmitted to them from their fathers. All those who were circumcised, though they had embraced Christianity, were considered, all over the pagan world, as Jews: but all those who remained in a state of uncircumcision, while they professedly received the gospel, were equally persecuted by Jews and pagans. There were teachers among them, therefore, who, in order to screen themselves from these persecutions, submitted to be circumcised, and recommended circumcision to their disciples."

These are the words of St. Jerome, and they throw much light on what our apostle says in the

* Father Hardouin, in his Dissertation on Galatians ii. 10.

12th verse of the chapter, from which I have taken my text. *As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised: only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.* And, as a relaxed morality has always the most numerous supporters, we see that, in the church of Galatia, the teachers who made the greatest use of this artifice, not only attracted the greatest number of disciples, but likewise made that superiority a source of vain-glorious boasting. This is the sense of the words which immediately precede our text: *For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law: but desire to have you circumcised, that they might glory in your flesh.* These were the three descriptions of opponents against whom Paul had to maintain the inutility of the observance of the *Levitical ceremonial*, and to assert the exclusive *doctrine of the cross*.

One of the principal causes of the obscurity of St. Paul's Epistles, is this, that it is not always easy to distinguish the *general* arguments which that apostle advances in them, from certain reasonings of a different kind, which are conclusive only against some *particular* adversaries. Is it not evident, for example, that all the consequences which he deduces from the history of Hagar, whom he makes the emblem of the ancient Dispensation; and from that of Sarah, whom he makes the emblem of the evangelical, could make an impression only on the mind of Jews, who were accustomed to allegory, and who particularly discovered it in the different condition of that wife, and of that handmaid, of Abraham; as appears in many passages of Philo, which it would be improper, at present, to introduce.

Now, my brethren, it is impossible to have a clear conception of the Epistles of our Apostle, without carefully distinguishing those different adversaries whom he had to combat, and the different arguments which he employs to confute them. Nay this distinction is the very key which explains to us the different conduct observed by the apostles toward their proselytes. For they believed themselves obliged, with respect to those who had come over from Judaism, to tolerate that *Levitical ceremonial*, to which they were attached by the prejudices of birth: whereas this connivance might have proved dangerous to others, who conformed to the practice of it merely from the dastardly motive which induced them to disguise their religion, or to screen themselves from the persecution to which it exposed them who gloried in making profession of it.

But whatever difference there may be in the character of the opponents whom the apostle was combating, and in the arguments which he employed to confute them, he presses on all of them this principle, on which the whole fabric of Christianity rests: The sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered up, that of his own life, is the only one capable of satisfying the demands of divine justice, awakened to the punishment of human guilt: and to divide the glory of *the Redeemer's sacrifice* with *the Levitical ceremonial*, was, as he expresses it, to *preach another gospel:* was to *fall from grace;* was to lose the fruit of all the sufferings endured in the cause of Christianity: was a doctrine worthy of being rejected with execration, were it to be preached even by *an angel from heaven.* Our apostle goes still further; he solemnly protests that no worldly consideration should ever have power to make him renounce this leading truth of

the gospel; that the more it exposed him to hatred and suffering, the more he would rejoice in the knowledge of it, and in making it known to others: in a word, he declares he will continue to preach the cross, were the consequence to be that he himself should be nailed to it: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* This is the general scope of the Epistle to the Galatians, and particularly of our text, which is the conclusion of it.

But it is of importance to descend into a more particular detail. And, in order to throw more light on my subject, I propose, as far as the limits prescribed me permit, to attempt the three following things:

I. I shall examine, wherein those sentiments of the Christian consist, which enable him to say that *the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world.*

II. I shall shew that in such sentiments as these, true glory consists.

III. I shall demonstrate that it is the cross of Christ, and the cross of Christ alone, which can inspire us with these sentiments: from which I shall deduce this farther consequence, that in the cross of Christ alone we can find a just ground of glorying. Vouchsafe us a few moments more of your attention, to the elucidation of these interesting truths.

I. What is the disposition of mind denoted by these expressions, *the world is crucified unto me: I am crucified unto the world?* In order to have

just ideas of this reciprocal crucifixion, we must comprehend, 1. The nature of it. 2. The degrees. 3. The bitterness.

1. The nature of it. *The world is crucified unto me: I am crucified unto the world:* this is a figurative mode of expression importing a total rupture with the world. Distinguish two different senses in which the term *world* may be taken: the world of nature, and the world of cupidity. By the world of nature, we understand that vast assemblage of beings which the almighty arm of Jehovah has formed, but these considered as they are in themselves. By the world of cupidity, we understand those self-same beings, considered so far as, by our abuse of them, they seduce us from the obedience which we owe to the Creator. Of the natural world it is said, Gen. i. 31. *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.* And St. Paul says, 1 Tim. iv. 4. that *every creature of God is good . . . . if it be received with thanksgiving.* The Christian does not break with the world in this first sense of the word. On the contrary, he makes it the object of his frequent meditation: he discovers in it the perfections of the great Being who created it: *The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work,* Psa. xix. 1. Nay more, he makes it the object of his hope: *For the promise,* I quote the words of St. Paul, in chap. iv. 13. of his Epistle to the Romans, *for the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was made unto Abraham:* And *all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world,* 1 Cor. iii. 22.

It is of the world of cupidity, therefore, that our apostle speaks, in the words which I am attempting to explain: that world of which it is said,

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, 1 Jo. ii. 17, 15. *The friendship of the world is enmity with*, or as it might have been rendered, *is hatred to God.* This is the world which *is crucified* to the Christian; the Christian *is crucified* to this world. The apostle, in expressing himself thus strongly, refines upon a form of speech which frequently occurs in scripture: that of *dying to an object. To die* to an object, is, in the style of the sacred authors, to have no further intercourse with that object. In this sense, our apostle says, in chap. ii. of this Epistle, ver. 19. *I through the law am dead to the law:* in other words, the genius of severity which predominates in the Mosaic economy, lays me under the necessity of entirely renouncing it, *that I might live unto God;* the meaning of which evidently is this, that I might have undivided recourse to a dispensation which presents the deity as more accessible to me. In like manner, *to die to the world of cupidity*, or, what amounts to the same thing, *to die unto sin*, is, to renounce sin: *how shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 2. 11. I am still quoting the words of St. Paul.

But as if a violent death were more really dying, than death in a milder form, Scripture, in order to mark more decidedly the sincerity of the renunciation of the world, which is ascribed to the Christian, is not satisfied with representing him as *dead*, but holds him up as *crucified* to the world of cupidity: *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him*, Rom. vi. 6. *They who are in Christ have crucified the flesh, with its lusts:* and in the

text, *the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world:* that is, illicit cupidity exists no longer with respect to me, and I subsist no longer with respect to it.

2. There is, however, a certain degree of ambiguity in these ideas of *deadness to the world*, of *crucifixion to the world*, of *a total rupture with the world*. For this reason it is that we said, that in order to have just ideas of this disposition of mind, it is not sufficient to comprehend the *nature* of it, but that we should also understand the *gradations* of which it admits. If, in order worthily to sustain the Christian character, an absolute renunciation of the world, in the literal sense of the words, were indispensably necessary, where is the person, alas! who durst pretend to assume that name? Would it be a Noah? Would it be an Abraham? Would it be a Moses? Would it be a David? Would it be a Peter? Would it be a Paul? Would it be one of you, Christians of our own days? who seem to have carried piety to its highest degree of fervor, and *who shine as lights in the world*, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, Phil. ii. 15.

Where, then, are those saints to be found, in whom an ill-smothered cupidity emits no sparks? That female is an example of what is called virtue, by way of eminence, in her sex; and which, according to the ideas of the age in which we live, seems to constitute the whole of virtue, as far as she is concerned; but, impregnable to all the assaults that can be made upon her chastity, she succombs under the slightest temptation that attacks her on the side of avarice, and she loses all self-government, the moment you recommend to her to take care that her charities be in something like proportion to her opulence.

That man is a pattern of reflective retirement, and modest silence; but, unshaken by the rudest attacks made upon his spirit of reserve, he yields to the slightest solicitations of pride; he decks himself out with the names and titles of his ancestors, he admires himself in the poorest effusions of his brain. How easy would it be to multiply examples of this sort!

But if it be impossible to say, taking the expression in the strictness of interpretation, that the Christian has broken off all commerce with the world, that he is *dead to the world*, that *the world is crucified unto him*, and that *he is crucified unto the world;* he possesses this disposition of mind, nevertheless, in various respects, and to a certain degree. *He is crucified unto the world*, he is so in respect of intention, he has that sincere will *to pull down every strong hold, ever thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God:* it is an expression of St. Paul, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Hence such protestations as these: *O Lord! thou hast searched me, and known me*, Psa. cxxxix. 1. *Lord! thou knowest that I love thee*, Jo. xxi. 17. Hence the bitterness of regret on account of remaining imperfection: *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. Hence those prayers for the communication of fresh supplies of heavenly aid: *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderous things out of thy law*, Psa. cxix. 18. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: Thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness*, Psa. cxliii. 10.

He is crucified unto the world. He is so in respect of exertion and actual progress. Hence those unremitting conflicts with the remains of indwelling corruption: *I keep under my body, and*

bring it into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27. Hence those advances in the Christian course: *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after . . . . This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,* Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

He is crucified unto the world. He is so in respect to hope and fervor. Hence those sighings after the dissolution of the body, which forms, as it were, a wall of separation between God and us. Hence those ardent breathings after a dispensation, an economy of things, in which we shall be able to give an unrestrained effusion to the love of order, and be completely united to Jesus Christ. *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life, ... knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: . . . . . and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,* 2 Cor. v. 4, 6, 8.

3. But the Holy Spirit, in representing to us our renunciation of the world, under the idea of a *death,* of a *crucifixion,* intended to mark not only the *nature,* and the *digress* of the disposition of mind which these expressions denote; but likewise to indicate the *difficulty,* the *bitterness* of making such a sacrifice.

In very rare instances do men die without suffering. Death, in the mildest form, is usually preceded by violent symptoms, which some have denominated the *harbingers of death.* These harbingers of death, are mortal swoonings, feverish

heats, paroxysms of pain, tortures insupportable. Crucifixion, especially, was the most cruel punishment which human justice, shall I call it? or human barbarity ever invented. The imagination recoils from the representation of a man nailed to a tree, suspended by the iron which pierces his hands and his feet, pressed downward with the weight of his body, the blood of which is drained off drop by drop, till he expires merely from the excess of anguish.

Is this frightful image overstrained, when employed to represent the pains which the Christian is called to endure, the conflicts which he has to maintain, the sacrifices which he is bound to make, agonies which he is under an indispensable necessity to undergo, before he possibly can attain that blessed state which our apostle had, through grace, arrived at, when he said, in the words of my text, *the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world!*

Represent to yourselves a Christian, represent to yourselves a man as yet a novice in the school of Jesus Christ, called to combat, sometimes the propensities which he brought with him into the world; sometimes to eradicate a habit which has grown up in him, till it is become a second nature; sometimes, to stem the torrent of custom and example; sometimes, to mortify and subdue a headstrong passion, which engrosses him, transports him, drags him away captive; sometimes, to bid an everlasting farewell to the place of his birth, to his kindred, and like Abraham, *to go out, not knowing whither he went;* sometimes, with that same patriarch, to immolate an only son; to tear himself, on a dying bed, from friends, from a spouse, from a child, whom he loves as his own

soul; and all this without murmuring or complaining; and all this, because it is the will of God; and all this, with that submission which was expressed by Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of the Christian faith, his Redeemer and his pattern: *Not what I will, but what thou wilt*, Matt. xxvi. 39.

O cross of my Saviour, how heavily dost thou press, when laid upon a man who has not yet carried love to thee to that height, which renders all things easy to him who loveth! O path of virtue, which appearest so smooth to them that walk in thee, how rugged is the road which leadeth unto thee! O yoke of Jesus Christ, so easy! burden so light to him who has been accustomed to bear thee; how difficult, how oppressive to those who are but beginning to try their strength! You see it, accordingly, my brethren! you see it on the page of inspiration, *to renounce the world of cupidity*, is to present the body in sacrifice: *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1. it is to *cut off a right hand*, it is to *pluck out a right eye*, Matt. v. 29, 30. it is for a man to *deny himself*, it is to *take up the cross:* For *if any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*, Matt. xvi. 24: it is, in a word, to be *crucified with Jesus Christ;* for *I am crucified with Christ*, Gal. ii. 20: and in the words of the text, *The world is crucified unto unto me, and I am crucified unto the world.* My God, how much it costs to be a Christian!

SERMON X.

PART II.

THE TRUE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

HAVING presented you with a general view of the apostle's reasoning in this epistle; having considered it as an answer to three different classes of opponents, whom St. Paul had to combat; namely, those who maintained the observance of the *Levitical institutions*, to the disparagement of the gospel: 1. From the prejudice of birth and education: 2. From an excess of complaisance: 3. From criminal policy: We proceeded to shew, that whatever difference of motive and opinion might prevail, among these three descriptions of adversaries whom our apostle had to encounter, and however different the strain of reasoning which he employs, according as the character of each demanded, he supports, in opposition to

them all, this principle, on which the whole of Christianity rests, namely, that the sacrifice which the Redeemer offered up of his own life, is alone capable of satisfying divine justice, and of reconciling guilty man to God.

We then entered into a more particular detail on the subject, by proposing,

I. To examine, wherein that disposition of the Christian consists, by which he is enabled, with St. Paul, to say, *the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world.*

II. To shew, that in such dispositions as these true glory consists.

III. To demonstrate, that it is the cross of Christ, and the cross of Christ only, which can inspire us with these sentiments; as a foundation for this farther conclusion, that in the cross of Christ alone we can find a just ground of glorying.

The first of these three proposals we have endeavored to execute, by considering, 1. The *nature* of this reciprocal crucifixion: 2. The *gradation* of which it admits: 3. The *difficulty*, the *bitterness* of making a sacrifice so very painful. We now proceed to what we next proposed, namely,

II. To shew, that in such dispositions, as are expressed by our apostle, true glory consists.

In order to elucidate and confirm this position, I mean to institute a comparison between the hero of this world and the Christian hero, in the view of making it evidently apparent, that this last has infinitely the superiority over the other. From what sources does the hero of this world pretend to derive his glory?

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory from the greatness of the master to whom his services are devoted. He congratulates himself on contributing to the glory of those men, who are so highly exalted above the rest of mankind, on being the support of their throne, and the guardian of their crown. The master, to whose service the Christian has devoted himself, is the King of Kings: he it is, in whose presence all the potentates of the earth, *are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance*, Isa. xl. 15. He it is, by whose supreme authority *kings reign, and princes decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. It is true that the greatness of this adorable Being raises him far above all our services. It is true that his throne is established for ever; and that the united force of all created things would in vain attempt to shake it. But if the Christian can contribute nothing to the glory of so great a master, he publishes it abroad, he confounds those who presume to invade it, he makes it to be known over the whole earth.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, from the hatred with which he is animated, against the enemy on whom he is making war. What enemy more hateful can a man engage, than the world? It is the world which degrades us from our natural greatness; which effaces, from the soul of man, those traits which the finger of deity himself has impressed upon it; which destroys our pretensions to a blessed immortality.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, from the dignity of the persons who have preceded him in the same honorable career. It is considered, in the world, as glorious, to succeed those illustrious men who have filled the universe with the sound of their name, who have made

terror to stalk before them, and who signalized themselves by exploits more than human. The Christian has been preceded, in his career, by patriarchs, by prophets, by apostles, by martyrs, by those *multitudes of the redeemed, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,* Rev. v. 9. Those holy men have been called to wage war, with sin, as we are, to subdue our passions; to form in their inner man, as we are, piety, charity, patience, the habit and the practice of every virtue. The Christian has been preceded, in his career, by Jesus Christ himself, the author and the finisher of the faith. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame,* Heb. xii. 1, 2.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, from the brilliancy of his atchievements. But who has greater exploits to glory in than the Christian can display? To shake off the yoke of prejudice, to despise the maxims of men, to resist flesh and blood, to subdue passion, to brave death, to suffer martyrdom, to remain unmoved amidst the convulsions of dissolving nature, and, in the very wreck of a laboring universe, to be able to apply those exceeding great and precious promises, which God has spoken by the mouth of the prophet, Isa. liv. 10. *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on*

thee. These, these are the atchievements of the Christian.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, fom the benefits which he has procured to others, from the blessings with which he has enriched his country, from the slaves whose chains he has burst asunder, from the monsters of which he has purged the earth. Who is, in such respects as these, a greater benefactor to society than the Christian? He is, at once, its bulwark, its light, and its model.

The hero of this world sometimes derives his glory, from the acclamations which his exploits excite, and from the magnificence of the recompence with which his merits are to be crowned. But whence proceed the acclamations which inflate his pride? Does it belong to venal souls, to courtiers, to hireling panegyrists? Does it belong to persons of this description to distribute commendation and applause? Have they any thing like the idea of true glory? Extend, Christian, extend thy meditations, up to the greatness of the Supreme Being! Think of that adorable Intelligence, who unites in his essence all that deserves the name of great! Contemplate the Divinity surrounded with angels, with archangels, with the seraphim! Listen to the concerts which those blessed spirits compose, to the glory of his name! Behold them penetrated, ravished, transported with the divine beauties which are disclosed to their view; employing eternity in celebrating their excellency, and crying aloud, day and night, *Holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of his glory,* Isa. vi. 3. *Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever! Amen.* Rev. vii. 12. *Great and mar-*

vellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name! for thou only art holy, Rev. xv. 3, 4.

This Being, so worthy to be praised, and praised in a manner so worthy of him, he it is who has been preparing acclamations for the conquerors of the world. Yes, Christian combatant! after thou hast been treated *as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. 13. after thou shalt have mortified, subjected, crucified this flesh; after thou shalt have borne this *cross*, which was once *to the Jews a stumbling block; and to the Greeks foolishness;* and which is still to this day, *foolishness* and a *stumbling block* to those who ought to consider it as their highest glory to bear it; thou shalt be called forth in the presence of men and of angels; the great God shall distinguish thee amidst the innumerable company of the saints; he shall address thee in these words: *Well done, good and faithful servant*, Matt. xxv. 21. He will fulfil the promise which he this day is making to all who combat under the banner of the cross: *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne*, Rev. iii. 21.

Ah! glory of the hero of this world, profane panegyrics, inscriptions conceived in high swelling words of vanity, superb trophies, diadems, fitter to serve as an amusement to children, than to engage the attention of reasonable men! what have ye once to be compared with the acclamations, and with the crowns prepared for the Christian hero? I sacrifice, my brethren, to the standard prescribed to the duration of these exercises, the delicious meditations which this branch of my subject so copiously supplies; and all I farther request of you, is a moment's attention, while I endeavor to make

you sensible, that it is in *the cross of Jesus Christ* alone, we find every thing necessary to inspire these noble dispositions, in order to deduce this consequence, that in the *cross of Jesus Christ* alone the Christian must look for true glory; and in order to justify this sentiment of our apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!* Under what aspect can you contemplate *the cross of Christ*, that does not dispose you to break off entirely with the world?

III. If we consider *that cross* in respect of its harmony with the whole contradiction which Jesus Christ endured upon earth, it has a powerful tendency to awaken in us the dispositions which St. Paul expresses, so as to say with him, *the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world.* Our great Master finishes upon a cross, a life passed in contempt, in indigence, in mortification of the senses, in hunger, in thirst, in weariness, in separation from the world: would it be becoming in a Christian to lull himself to sleep in the arms of indigence, to addict himself to the pleasures of sense, to suffer himself to be enchanted by the charms of voluptuousness, to breathe after nothing but ease, but convenience, but repose, but abundance? *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord,* Jo. xv. 18, 20.

If we consider *the cross of Christ*, in relation to the sacrifice which is there offered up to divine justice, it has a powerful tendency to produce in us the dispositions expressed by St. Paul, so as to be able to say with him, *The world is crucified unto*

me, and I am crucified unto the world. That worldly life, those dissipations, those accumulated rebellions against the commands of heaven; that cupidity which engrosses us, and constitutes all our delight, in what is all this to terminate? Observe the tempests which it gathers around the head of those who give themselves up to criminal indulgence. Jesus Christ was perfectly exempt from sin, but he took ours upon himself, *he bear them in his own body on the tree,* 1 Pet. ii. 24: and it was for this end that he underwent, on that accursed tree, all those torments, which his divinity and his innocence enabled him to support, without sinking under the load. Behold in this, O sinner, the fearful doom which awaits thee. Yes, unless thou art *crucified with Christ* by faith, thou shalt be by the justice of God. And then all the fury of that justice shall be levelled at thy head, as it was at his. Then thou shalt be exposed, on a dying bed, to the dreadful conflicts which he endured in Gethsemane. Thou shalt shudder at the idea of that punishment which an avenging deity is preparing for thee. Thou shalt sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, when the eye is directed to the tribunal of justice, whither thou art going to be dragged. Nay more, thou shalt then be condemned to compensate, by the duration of thy punishment, what the weakness of thy nature renders thee incapable of supporting in respect of weight. Ages accumulated upon ages shall set no bounds to thy torments. Thou shalt be accursed of God through eternity, as Jesus Christ was in time: and that cross which thou refusedst to bear for a time, thou must bear for ever and ever.

If we consider *the cross of Jesus Christ*, with relation to the atrocious guilt of those who despise a sacrifice of such high value, we shall feel a powerful

tendency to adopt the dispositions of St. Paul, and to say with him, *the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world.* The image which I would here trace for your inspection is still that of St. Paul. This apostle depicts to us the love of the world, as a contempt of *the cross of Christ*, and as a renewal of the punishment which he suffered. The idea of what such a crime deserves, absorbs and confounds his spirit; he cannot find colors strong enough to paint it; and he satisfies himself with asking, after he had mentioned the punishment inflicted on those who had violated the law of Moses: *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?* Heb. x. 29.

Here, sinner, here read thy sentence! The voice of the blood of the Son of God will cry, from earth to heaven, for vengeance against thee. God will, one, day, call thee to give an account of the blood of a Son so dear to him. He will say to thee as St. Peter did to those who shed it; *Thou hast denied the Holy One and the just . . . . and killed the Prince of Life*, Acts iii. 14, 15. He will pursue thee with all his plagues, as if thou hadst imbrued thy hands in that blood, and as he has pursued those who were actually guilty of that crime.

But let us press motives more gentle, and more congenial to the dignity of the redeemed of the Lord. If we consider *the cross of Christ*, in relation to the proofs which he there displays to us of his love, is it possible we should find any thing too painful in the sacrifices which he demands of us? Is it possible for us to do too much for that Jesus who has done so much for us? When the heart

feels a disposition to revolt against the morality of the gospel: when you are tempted to say, *This is a hard saying; who can hear it;* Jo. vi. 60: When the gate of heaven seems too strait for you; when the flesh would exaggerate the difficulties of working out your salvation; when it seems as if we were tearing the heart from your bosom, in charging you to curb the impetuosity, of your temperament, to resist the torrent of irregular desire, to give a portion of your goods to the poor, to sacrifice a Dalilah or a Drusilla: follow your Saviour to Calvary; behold him passing the brook Kidron, ascending the fatal Mount on which his sacrifice was to be accomplished; behold that concourse of woes which constrain him to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. If ye can hold out against objects like these!

If we consider *the cross of Jesus Christ*, relatively to the proofs, which it supplies in support of the doctrine of him who there finished his life, it will be a powerful inducement to adopt the sentiments of St. Paul. It is natural, I allow, for reasonable beings, of whom sacrifices are exacted, so costly as those which Christianity prescribes, to expect full assurance of the truth of that religion. It is impossible to employ too much precaution, when the point in question is whether or not we are to surrender victims so beloved. The slightest doubt on this head is of essential importance. But is this article susceptible of the slightest doubt? Jesus Chirst sealed with his blood the doctrine which he taught; he was not only the hero of the religion which we preach, but likewise the martyr of it.

If we consider *the cross of Christ*, relatively to the aid necessary to form us to the sentiments expressed by St. Paul, it still powerfully presses to adopt them. It assures, on the part of God, every

support we can need, in maintaining the conflicts to which we are called. It lays the foundation of this reasoning, the justest, the most conclusive which intelligence ever formed: *If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 31, 32.

And, to conclude this discourse by representing the same images which we traced in the beginning of it, if we consider *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, relatively to the glory which followed, it still presses us to adopt the sentiments of St. Paul in the text. The idea of that glory carried Jesus Christ through all that was most painful in his sacrifice. On the eve of consummating it, he thus addresses his heavenly Father: *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Father, glorify thy name . . . . Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee . . . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had before the world was,* Jo. xii. 23, 28. xvii. 1, 4, 5. This expectation was not disappointed. The conflict was long, it was severe, but it came to a period; but heavenly messengers descended to receive him as he issued from the tomb; but a cloud came to raise him from the earth; but the gates of heaven opened, with the acclamations of the church triumphant, celebrating his victories, and hailing his exaltation in these strains: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in,* Psa. xxiv. 7.

Christians! let our eyes settle on this object. To suffer with Jesus Christ, is to have full assurance

of reigning with him. We do not mean to conceal from you the pains which await you in the career prescribed to the followers of the Redeemer. It is a hard thing to renounce all that flatters, all that pleases, all that charms. It is hard to be told incessantly of difficulties to be surmounted, of enemies to be encountered, of a cross to be borne, of crucifixion to be endured. It is hard for a man to mortify himself, while all around him are rejoicing; while they are refining on pleasure; while they are employing their utmost ingenuity to procure new amusements; while they are distilling their brain to diversify their delights; while they are spending life in sports, in feasting, in gaiety, in spectacle on spectacle. The conflict is long, it is violent, I acknowledge it; but it draws to a period; but your cross shall be followed by the same triumph which that of your Saviour was: *Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son:* but you, in expiring on your cross, you shall with holy joy and confidence, commend your soul to God, as he commended his; and, closing your eyes in death, say, *Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit*, Luke xxiii. 46: but the angels shall descend to receive that departing spirit, to convey it to the bosom of your God; and after having rejoiced in your conversion, they shall rejoice together in your beatitude, as they rejoiced in his; but in the great day of the restitution of all things, you shall ascend on the clouds of heaven, as Jesus Christ did; you shall be exalted, like him, far above all heavens; and you shall assume, together with him, a seat on the throne of the majesty of God.

Thus it is that *the cross of Christ* forms us to the sentiments of our apostle; thus it is that we are enabled to say: *The world is crucified unto*

us, and we are crucified unto the world: thus it is that the cross conducts us to true glory. O glorious cross! thou shalt ever be the object of my study, and of my meditation! I will propose to myself to know nothing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified! *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!* May God grant us this grace! Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

HEB. ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through the fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.

TO know what death is, without being terrified at it, is the highest degree of perfection attainable by the human mind; it is the highest point of felicity which a man can reach, while in this valley of tears. I say to know death, without fearing it; and it is in the union of these two things we are to look for that effort of genius so worthy of emulation, and that perfection of felicity so much calculated to kindle ardent desire. For to brave death without knowing what it is; to shut our eyes against all that is hideous in its aspect, in order to combat it with success, this is so far from indicating a superior excellency of disposition, that it must be considered rather as a mental derangement: so far from being the height of felicity, it is the extreme of misery.

We have seen philosophers shaking off (if after all they did so in reality, and if that intrepid outside did not conceal a trembling heart), we have seen philosophers shaking off the fear of death; but they did not know it. They viewed it under only borrowed aspects. They figured it to themselves, as either reducing the nature of man to a state of annihilation, or as summoning him before chimerical tribunals, or as followed by a certain imaginary felicity.

We have seen heroes, as the world calls them, pretending to brave the terrors of death; but they did not know it: they represented it to themselves as crowned with laurels, as decorated with trophies, as figuring on the page of the historian.

We have seen, and still see every day, libertines pretending to brave the terrors of death; but they know it not. Their indolence is the cause of that assumed firmness; and they are incapable of enjoying tranquillity, but by banishing the idea of a period, the horror of which they are unable to overcome. But not to disguise this formidable object; to view it in its true light; to fix the eye steadily on every feature; to have a perception of all its terrors; in a word, to know what death is, without being terrified at it, to repeat it once more, is the highest degree of perfection attainable by the human mind; it is the highest point of felicity which a man can reach while in this valley of tears.

Sovereign wisdom, my brethren, forms his children to true heroism. That wisdom effects what neither philosophers by their false maxims, nor the heroes of the world by their affected intrepidity, nor the libertine by his insensibility and indolence; that wisdom effects what all the powers in the universe could not have produced, and alone bestows on the Christian the privilege of knowing death

without fearing it. All this is contained in the words which I have read as the subject of the present discourse: *through fear of death*, men *were all their life time subject to bondage:* there is the power of death; there his empire; there his triumph. Jesus Christ, *through* his *death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivers them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage:* behold death vanquished! there are his spoils: there is the triumph over him: salutary ideas! which will present themselves in succession to our thoughts in the sequel of this exercise. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.*

With respect to the first words, *forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same*, I shall only remark, that by *the children* referred to, we are to understand men in general, and believers in particular: and by that *flesh and blood*, we are not to understand *corruption*, as in some other passages of scripture, but *human nature;* so that when it is said, *as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus Christ likewise took part of the same*, the meaning is, he assumed a body such as ours is.

Having made these few short remarks on the first words, we shall confine ourselves to the two ideas which have been indicated, and shall employ what remains of our time, in proving this fundamental truth, that Jesus Christ, *by his death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that*

is, the devil, in order that he might *deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.*

The terrors of death are expressed in terms powerfully energetical, in this text. It represents to us a mighty tyrant causing death to march at his command, and subjecting the whole universe to his dominion. This tyrant is the devil. He is the personage here described, and who, *through the fear of death, subjects men to bondage.*

You stand aghast, no doubt, on beholding the whole human race reduced to a subjection under a master so detestable. The fact, however, cannot be called in question: this great enemy of our salvation unquestionably exercises a sort of empire over the universe. Though the scriptures speak sparingly of the nature and functions of this malignant spirit, they say enough of them to convey to us a striking idea of his power, and to render it formidable to us. The scripture tells us, 1. That he *tempts* men to sin; witness the wiles which he practised on our first parents; witness that which St. Paul says of him in chap. ii. of the Epistle to the Ephesians: *the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience:* witness the name of *Tempter* given to him in the gospel history, Matt. iv. 3. The scripture informs us, 2. That he *accuses* men before God of those very crimes which he solicited them to commit: witness the prophet Zechariah, who was *shewed Joshua, the high-priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him;* or, as it might have been rendered, to be his *adversary* or *accuser:* witness the descriptive appellation of *calumniator* or *accuser*, given him by St. John in the Apocalypse. The scripture tells us, 3. That he some-

times *torments* men: witness the history of Job; witness what St. Paul says of his *delivering up unto Satan* the incestuous person at Corinth. This power of delivering up to Satan, to mention it by the way, was a part of the miraculous gifts conferred on the apostles; gifts transmitted to the immediate succeeding ages of the church, at least if Paulinus is to be credited on this subject, who relates that an abandoned wretch was, by St. Ambrosius, delivered up to Satan, who tore him in pieces. Finally, 4. We find the devil designed in scripture, *the God of the world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *and the Prince of the power of the air*, Eph. ii. 2. You likewise see him represented as acting on the waters of the sea, as raising tempests, and as smiting the children of men with various kinds of plagues.

But if the devil be represented as exercising an influence over the ills of human life, he is still more especially represented as exerting his power over our death, the last and most formidable of all our woes. The Jews were impressed with ideas of this kind. Nay, they did not satisfy themselves with general notions on this subject. They entered into the detail, (for, my brethren, it has been an infirmity incident to man in every age, to assert confidently on subjects the most mysterious and concealed), they said that the devil, to whom they gave the name of Samael, *had the empire of death*, that his power extended so far as to prevent the resurrection of the wicked. St. Paul, in the words of our text, adopts their mode of expression, as his custom is, without propagating their error; he describes the evil Spirit as the person who possesses *the empire of death*, and who, *through the fear of death, subjects men all their life time to bondage*.

But, Christians, be not dismayed at beholding this fearful image. *Surely there is no inchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel*, Num. xxiii. 23. *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. xii. 10, 11. Let us, however, reduce our reflections on the subject to method. Three considerations render death formidable to man: three considerations disarm death in the apprehension of the Christian: 1. The veil which conceals, from the eyes of the dying person, the state on which he is about to enter; 2. The remorse of conscience which the recollection of his guilt excites: 3. The loss of titles, honor, and every other earthly possession. In these respects, chiefly, *he who has the power of death, subjects men to bondage:* these are the things which render death formidable.

In opposition to this, the death of Jesus Christ, 1. Removes the veil which concealed futurity from us, and constitutes an authentic proof of the immortality of the soul. 2. The death of Jesus Christ is a sacrifice presented to divine justice, for the remission of our sins. 3. The death of Jesus Christ gives us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. These are the three considerations which disarm death, in the apprehension of the dying believer. And this is a brief extract of the important truths delivered in this text.

The devil renders death formidable, through uncertainty respecting the nature of our souls; the death of Christ dispels that terror, by demonstrating to us that the soul is immortal. The

devil renders death formidable, by awakening the recollection of past guilt; the death of Jesus Christ restores confidence and joy, for it is the expiation of all our sins. The devil clothes death with terror, by rendering us sensible to the loss of those possessions, of which death is going to deprive us: the death of Jesus Christ tranquillizes the mind, because it is a pledge to us of an eternal felicity. The first of these ideas represents Jesus Christ to us as a *martyr*, who has sealed with his own blood, a doctrine which rests entirely on the immortality of the soul. The second represents him as a *victim*, offering himself in our stead, to divine justice. And the third represents him as a *conqueror*, who has, by his death, acquired for us a kingdom of everlasting bliss.

Had we nothing farther in view than to present you with vague ideas of the sentiments of the sacred authors, on this subject, here our discourse might be concluded. But these truths, treated thus generally, could make but a slight impression. It is of importance to press them one by one, and, opposing in every particular, the triumph of the Redeemer, to the empire of the wicked one, to place in its clearest point of light, the interesting truth contained in our text, namely, that Jesus Christ, *through his own death, has destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;* that he might *deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.*

I. The first consideration which renders death formidable; the first yoke imposed on the necks of the children of men, by that tremendous prince who *has the power of death,* is the fear of falling back into nothing, which the prospect of death

awakens. The greatest of all the advantages which we possess, and that which indeed is the foundation of all the rest, is existence. We accordingly observe that old people, though all their faculties are much impaired, always enjoy a certain nameless superiority over young persons. The reflection, that there was a time when they existed, while as yet the young did not exist, constitutes this superiority; and young persons, in their turn, feel a superiority, suggested to them by the thought, that a time is coming when they shall exist, whereas the others shall be no more. Death terminates, to appearance, an advantage which is the foundation of every other. And is it any wonder that the heart of man should sink under such a consideration?

In vain will we flee for refuge, from this depressing reflection, to the arguments which reason, even a well-directed reason, supplies. If they are satisfying of themselves, and calculated to impress the philosophic mind, they are far beyond the reach of a vulgar understanding, to which the very terms *spiritually* and *existence* are barbarous and unintelligible. To no purpose will we have recourse to what has been said on this subject, by the most enlightened of the Pagan world, and to what, in particular, Tacitas relates of Senaca, on his going into the bath which was to receive the blood, as it streamed from his opened veins: he be-sprinkled the by-standers with the fluid in which his limbs were immerged, with this memorable expression, that he presented those drops of water as a libation to Jupiter the deliverer. In order to secure us against terrors so formidable, we must have a guide more safe than our own reason. In order to attain a persuasion of the immortality of the soul, we must have a security less suspicious than that of a

Socrates or a Plato. Now that guide, my brethren, is the cross of Jesus Christ: that security is an expiring Redeemer. Two principles concur in the demonstration of this all-important truth.

1. The doctrine of Jesus Christ establishes the immortality of the soul.

2. The death of Jesus Christ is an irresistible proof of the truth of his doctrine.

1. That the doctrine of Jesus Christ establishes the immortality of the soul, is a point which no one pretends to dispute with us. A man has but to open his eyes in order to be convinced of it. We shall, accordingly, make but a single remark on this head. It is this: That the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, ought not to be considered merely as a particular point of the religion of Jesus Christ, independent of which it may subsist as a complete whole. It is a point without which Christianity cannot exist at all, and separated from which, the religion of Jesus Christ, the fullest, the most complete, and the most consistent that ever was presented to the world, becomes the most imperfect, barren, and inconsistent. The whole fabric of the gospel rests on this foundation, that the soul is immortal. Wherefore was it that Jesus Christ, the Lord of universal nature, had a manger for his cradle, and a stable for his palace? Because his *kingdom is not of this world*, Jo. xviii. 16. This supposes the immortality of the soul. Wherefore is the Christian encouraged to bid defiance to tyrants, who may drag him from a prison, from a dungeon, who may nail him to a cross, who may mangle his body on a wheel? It is because their power extends no further than to the *killing of the body*, Matt. x. 28. while the soul is placed far beyond their reach. This supposes immortality. Wherefore must the Christian deem himself mi-

serable, were he to atchieve the conquest of the whole world, at the expence of a good conscience? Because it will *profit a man nothing to gain the whole world*, if he *lose his own soul*, Matt. xvi. 26. This supposes immortality. Wherefore are we not the most miserable of all creatures? Because *we have hope in Christ not for this life only*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. This supposes immortality. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, therefore, establishes the truth of the immortality of the soul.

2. But we said, in the second place, that the death of Jesus Christ is a proof of his doctrine. He referred the world to his death, as a sign by which it might be ascertained whether or not he came from God. By this he proposes to stop the mouth of incredulity. Neither the purity of his life, nor the sanctity of his deportment, nor the lustre of his miracles, had as yet prevailed so far as to convince an unbelieving world of the truth of his mission. They must have sign upon sign, prodigy upon prodigy. Jesus Christ restricts himself to one: *Destroy this temple, and within three days I will build it up again*, Mark xiv. 58. *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas*, Matt. xii. 39. This sign could not labor under any ambiguity. And this sign was accomplished. There is no longer room to doubt a truth demonstrated in a manner so illustrious.

Our ancestors devised, with greater simplicity, it must be allowed, than strength of reasoning, a very singular proof of the innocence of persons accused. They presented to them a bar of hot iron. If the person under trial had the firmness to grasp it, and received no injury from the action of the burning metal, he was acquitted of the charge. This proof

was, as we have said, devised with more simplicity, than strength of reasoning: no one having a right to suppose that God will perform a miracle, to evince his innocence to the conviction of his judges. I acknowlege, at the same time, that had I been an eye witness of such an experiment: had I beheld that element which dissolves, which devours bodies the most obdurate, respecting the hand of a person accused of a crime, I should certainly have been very much struck at sight of such a spectacle.

But what shall we say of the Saviour of the world, after the proof to which he was put to? He *walked through the fire without being burnt*, Isa. xliii. 2. He descended into the bosom of the grave: the grave respected him, and those other insatiables which never say *it is enough*, Prov. xxx. 16. opened a passage for his return to the light. You feel the force of this argument. Jesus Christ having died, in support of the truth of a doctrine, entirely founded on the supposition of the immortality of the soul, there is no longer room to doubt whether the soul be immortal.

Let us here pause for a few moments, and before we enter on the second branch of our subject, let us consider how far this position, so clearly proved, so firmly established, has a tendency to fortify us against the fears of death.

Suppose for an instant, that we knew nothing respecting the state of souls, after this life is closed, and respecting the economy on which we must then enter; supposing God to have granted us no revelation whatever on this interesting article, but simply this, that our souls are immortal, a slight degree of meditation on the case, as thus stated, ought to operate as an inducement rather to wish for death, than to fear it. It appears probable that the soul, when disengaged from the senses, in which

it is now enveloped, will subsist in a manner infinitely more noble than it could do here below, during its union with matter. We are perfectly convinced that the body will, one day, contribute greatly to our felicity; it is an essential part of our being, without which our happiness must be incomplete. But this necessity, which fetters down the functions of the soul, on this earth, to the irregular movements of ill-assorted matter, is a real bondage. The soul is a prisoner in this body. A prisoner is a man susceptible of a thousand delights, but who can enjoy, however, only such pleasures as are compatible with the extent of the place in which he is shut up: his scope is limited to the capacity of his dungeon: he beholds the light only through the aperture of that dungeon: all his intercourse is confined to the persons who approach his dungeon. But let his prison doors be thrown open; from that moment, behold him in a state of much higher felicity. Thenceforward he can maintain social intercourse with all the men in the world: thenceforward he is able to expatiate over the spacious universe.

This exhibits a portrait of the soul. A prisoner to the senses, it can enjoy those delights only which have a reference to sense. It can see, only by means of the cuticles and the fibres of its eyes: it can hear, only by means of the action of the nerves and tympanum of its ears: it can think, only in conformity to certain modifications of its brain. The soul is susceptible of a thousand pleasures, of which it has not so much as the idea. A blind man has a soul capable of admitting the sensation of light; if he be deprived of it, the reason is, his senses are defective, or improperly disposed. Our souls are susceptible of a thousand unknown sensations; but they receive them not, in this economy of imper-

fection and wretchedness, because it is the will of God that they should perceive only through the medium of those organs, and that those organs, from their limited nature, should be capable of admitting only limited sensations.

But permit the soul to expatiate at large, let it take its natural flight, let these prison-walls be broken down, O then! the soul becomes capable of ten thousand inconceivable new delights. Wherefore do you point to that ghastly corpse? Wherefore deplore those eyes closed to the light, those spirits evaporated, that blood frozen in the veins, that motionless, lifeless mass of corruption? Why do you say to me, "My friend, my father, my spouse is no more; he sees, he hears, he acts no longer." He sees no longer, do you say? He sees no longer, I grant, by means of those visual rays which were formed in the retina of the eye; but he sees as do those pure intelligences which never were clothed with mortal flesh and blood. He hears no more through the medium of the action of the æthereal fluid, but he hears as a pure spirit. He thinks no longer through the intervention of the fibres of his brain; but he thinks from his own essence; because, being a pure spirit, the faculty of thought is essential to him, and inseparable from his nature.

SERMON XI.

PART II.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

HEB. ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through the fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.

IN discoursing from these words, we observed, that death is rendered formidable to man, by a threefold consideration, and that three considerations of an opposite nature strip him of all his terrors, in the eye of the believer in Christ Jesus. Death is formidable, 1. Because of the veil which conceals, from the eyes of the dying person, that state on which he is about to enter: 2. From remorse of conscience, which the recollection of past guilt excites: 3. From the loss of titles, honors, and all other earthly possessions.

In opposition to these, the death of Christ, 1. removes the veil which conceals futurity, and constitutes an authentic proof of the immortality of

the soul: 2. It is a sacrifice presented to divine justice for the remission of sin: 3. It gives us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. These are the considerations which disarm death of his terror, to the dying believer.

We have finished what was proposed on the first particular, and have shewn, 1. That the doctrine of Jesus Christ fully establishes the soul's immortality: and 2. That the death of Jesus Christ is an irresistible proof of the truth of his doctrine.

But to no purpose would it be to fortify the mind against the apprehension of ceasing to exist, unless we are delivered from the terror of being for ever miserable. In vain is it to have demonstrated that our souls are immortal, if we are haunted with the well-grounded apprehension of their falling into the hands of that *God*, who *is a consuming fire*. In this case, what constitutes a man's greatness, would constitute his misery. Let us endeavor,

II. In the second place, to dissipate the dreadful apprehension which a guilty conscience awakens, in the prospect of judgment to come. Having considered Jesus Christ as a *martyr*, who sealed with his own blood the doctrine which he preached, and his death as an argument in support of the immortality of the soul, taught in that doctrine: let us contemplate our divine Saviour as a *victim*, which God has substituted in our place, and his death as a sacrifice offered up to divine justice, for the expiation of our offences.

One of the principal dangers to be avoided in controversies, and particularly in that which we are going to handle, is to imagine that all arguments are of equal force. Extreme care must be taken to assign to each its true limits, and to say, this argument proves thus far, that goes so much farther,

We must thus advance step by step up to truth, and form, of those arguments united, a demonstration so much the more satisfactory, in proportion as we have granted to those who dispute it, all that they could in reason ask. On this principle, we divide our arguments into two classes. The first, we propose only as presumptions in favor of the doctrine of the satisfaction. To the second we ascribe the solidity and weight of demonstration. Of the first class are the following.

1. We allege human reason as a presumptive argument in support of the doctrine which we maintain. We do not mean to affirm, that human reason derives from the stores of her own illumination, the truth of this doctrine. So far from that, we confidently affirm, that this is one of the mysteries which are infinitely beyond the reach of human understanding. It is one of *the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. But we say that this mystery presents nothing that shocks human reason, or that implies a shadow of contradiction. What do we believe? That God has united the human nature to the divine, in the person of Jesus Christ, in a manner somewhat resembling that in which he has united the body to the soul, in the person of man. We say that this composition, (pardon the expression) this composition of humanity and of deity, suffered in what was human of it; and that what was divine gave value to the sufferings of the man, somewhat after the manner in which we put respect on a human body, not as a material substance, but as united to an intelligent soul.

These are the terms in which we propose our mystery. And there is nothing in this which involves a contradiction. If we had said that the di-

vinity and humanity were confounded or common; if we had said that the deity, who is impassible, suffered; if we had said that Jesus Christ as God, made satisfaction to Jesus Christ as God, reason might have justly reclaimed; but we say that Jesus Christ suffered as man; we say that the two natures in his person were distinct; we say that Jesus Christ, suffering as man, made satisfaction to God, maintaining the rights of deity. This is the first step we advance in his career. Our first argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

2. Our second argument is taken from the divine justice. We say, that the idea which we have of the divine justice, presents nothing inconsistent with the doctrine we are endeavoring to establish, but, on the contrary, leads us directly to adopt it. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that the innocent Jesus suffered as an innocent person; but we say that he suffered, as loaded with the guilt of the whole human race. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that Jesus Christ had *the iniquity of us all laid upon him*, whether he would or not; but we say that he took this heavy load upon him voluntarily. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that Jesus Christ took on himself the load of human guilt, to encourage men in the practice of sin; but we say, that he acted thus, in the view of sanctifying them, by procuring their pardon. The divine justice would be in opposition to our doctrine, did we affirm that Jesus Christ, in assuming the load of our guilt, sunk under the weight of it, so that the universe, for the sake of a few guilty wretches, was deprived of the most distinguished being that could possibly exist; but we say, that Jesus Christ, in dying for us, came off victorious

over death and the grave. The divine justice, therefore, presents nothing inconsistent with the doctrine of the satisfaction.

But we go much farther, and affirm, that the idea of divine justice leads directly to the doctrine. The atonement corresponds to the demands of justice. We shall not here presume to determine the question, Whether it is possible for God, consistently with his perfections, to pardon sin without exacting a satisfaction. Whatever advantage we might have over those who deny our thesis, we shall not press it on the present occasion. But, in any case, they must be disposed to make this concession: That if the wisdom of God has devised the means of obtaining a signal satisfaction to justice, in unison with the most illustrious display of goodness; if he can give to the universe an equivocal proof of his abhorrence of sin, in the very act of pardoning the sinner; if there be a method to keep offenders in awe, even while mercy is extended to them, it must undoubtedly be more proper to employ such a method than to omit it. This is the second step we advance toward our conclusion. Our second argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

3. Our third consideration is taken from the suggestions of conscience, and from the practice of all nations. Look at the most polished, and the most barbarous tribes of the human race; at nations the most idolatrous, and at those which have discovered the purest ideas on the subject of religion. Consult authors of the remotest antiquity, and authors the most recent: transport yourself to the ancient Egyptians, to the Phenicians, to the Gauls, to the Carthaginians, and you will find that, in all ages, and in every part of the globe, men have expressed a belief that the deity expected sacrifices should be offered up to him; nay, not only sacrifices, but

such as had, as far as it was possible, something like a proportion to his greatness. Hence those magnificent temples; hence those hecatombs; hence those human victims; hence that blood which streamed on the altars, and so many other rites of religious worship, the existence of which no one is disposed to call in question. What consequence do we deduce from this position? The truth of the doctrine of the atonement? No: we do not carry our inference so far. We only conclude, that there is no room to run down the Christian religion, if it instructs us that God demanded satisfaction to his justice, by an expiatory sacrifice, before he could give an unrestrained course to his goodness. The third argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

4. A fourth reflection hinges on the correspondence of our belief, respecting this particular, with that of every age of the Christian church, in uninterrupted succession, from Jesus Christ down to our own times. All the ages of the Christian world have, as we do, spoken of this sacrifice. But we must not enlarge. Whoever wishes for complete information on this particular, will find a very accurate collection of the testimonies of the fathers, at the end of the treatise on the satisfaction, composed by the celebrated Grotius. The doctrine of the atonement, therefore, is not a doctrine of yesterday, but has been transmitted from age to age, from Jesus Christ down to our own times. This argument we carry thus far, and no farther.

Here then we have a class of arguments which, after all, we would have you to consider only as so many presumptions in favor of the doctrine of the atonement. But surely we are warranted to proceed thus far at least in concluding: a doctrine in which human reason finds nothing contradictory: a doctrine which presents nothing repugnant to the di-

vine attributes; nay, to which the divine attributes directly lead us; a doctrine perfectly conformable to the suggestions of conscience, and to the practice of mankind in every age, and of every nation; a doctrine received in the Christian church from the beginning till now; a doctrine which, in all its parts, presents nothing but what is entirely worthy of God, when we examine it at the tribunal of our own understanding: such a doctrine contains nothing to excite our resentment, nothing that we ought not to be disposed to admit, if we find it clearly laid down in the scriptures.

Now, my brethren, we have only to open the Bible in order to find express testimonies to this purpose; and not only do we meet with an infinite number of passages, in which the doctrine is clearly taught, but a multitude of classes of such passages.

1. In the first class, we must rank all those passages which declare that Jesus Christ died for us. It would be no easy matter to enumerate them: *I delivered unto you first of all,* says St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, xv. 3. *that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, Christ also hath once suffered for sins,* says St. Peter, in his first epistle general, iii. 18. *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

2. In the second class must be ranked those passages which represent Jesus Christ as suffering the punishment which we had deserved. The fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah turns entirely on this subject: and the apostles hold the self-same language. They say expressly that Christ *was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin,* 2 Cor. v. 21. that he was *made a curse for us,* Gal. iii. 13. that

he *bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24.

3. In a third class must be ranked all those passages in which our salvation is represented as being the fruit of Christ's death. The persons, whose opinions we are combating, maintain themselves on a ground which we established in a former branch of this discourse, namely, that the death of Jesus Christ was a demonstration of the truth of his doctrine. They say that this is the reason for which our salvation is considered as the effect of that death. But if we are saved by the death of Jesus Christ, merely because it has sealed a doctrine which leads to our salvation, how comes it then, that our salvation is no where ascribed to the other parts of his ministry, which contributed, no less than his death, to the confirmation of his doctrine? Were not the miracles of Jesus Christ, for example, proofs equally authentic as his death was, of the truth of his doctrine? Whence comes it, that our salvation is no where ascribed to them? This is the very thing we are maintaining. The resurrection, the ascension, the miracles, were absolutely necessary to give us assurance, that the wrath of God was appeased; but Christ's death alone was capable of producing that effect. You will more sensibly feel the force of this argument, if you attend to the connection which our text has with what follows in the 17th verse: *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

If we are saved by the death of Jesus Christ, merely because that event sealed the truth of his doctrine, wherefore should it have been necessary for him to assume our flesh. Had he descended

from heaven in the effulgence of his glory; had he appeared upon Mount Zion, such as he was upon Mount Sinai, in flashes of lightning, with the voice of thunder, with a retinue of angels; would not the truth of the gospel have been established infinitely better than by the death of a man? Wherefore, then, was it necessary that Christ should die? It was because the victim of our transgressions must be put to death. This is St. Paul's reasoning. And for this reason it is that our salvation is no where ascribed to the death of the martyrs, though the death of the martyrs was, like that of Jesus Christ, a proof of the truth of the gospel.

4. In a fourth class, must be ranked all those passages which represent the death of Jesus Christ as the body and the reality, of which all the sacrifices prescribed by the law, were but the figure and the shadow. We shall select a single one out of a multitude. The greatest part of the Epistle to the Hebrews must be quoted to this effect. It is evident, that the great object of its author, is to engage Christians to look for that in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which the Jews, to no purpose, sought for in those which Moses prescribed. Now what did the Jews look for in their sacrifices? Was it not the means of appeasing the deity? If, therefore, the sacrifices of the Jews were the expiation of sin, only in figure, and in a shadow, if the sacrifice of Jesus Christ be their body and reality, does it not follow that Jesus Christ has really and literally expiated our transgressions? To pretend that the Levitical sacrifices were not offered up for the remission of great offences, but only for certain external indecencies, which rather polluted the flesh, than wounded the conscience, is an attempt to maintain one error by another: for a man has only to open his eyes, to be convinced that the Le-

vitical sacrifices were offered up for offences the most atrocious; it is needless to adduce any other evidence than the annual sacrifice prescribed, Lev. xvi. 21, 22. in the offering of which, Aaron *laid both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins . . . . and the goat did bear upon him all their iniquities.*

5. In a fifth class must be ranked all the circumstances of the passion of Jesus Christ, and of his agony in the garden; that sorrow, those fears, those agitations, those cries, those tears, that bloody sweat, those bitter complaints: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. The argument derived from this will appear of still greater weight, if you support it by thus reflecting, that no person in the universe ought to have met death with so much joy as Jesus Christ, had he suffered a mere ordinary death. Christ died with a perfect submission to the will of his Father, and with a fervant love to mankind. Christ died in the full assurance of the justice of his cause, and of the innocency of his life. Christ died completely persuaded of the immortality of the soul, and of the certainty of a life to come. Christ died under a complete assurance of the exalted felicity which he was to enjoy after death. He had come from God. He was returning to God. Nay, there ought to have been something more particular in his triumph, than in that of the generality of believers. Because he had *made himself of no reputation*; God was about to *give him a name which is above every name.* A cloud was going to serve him as a triumphal car, and the church triumphant was preparing to receive him with acclamations of joy: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye*

lipt up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in, Psa. xxiv. 7.

What, then, are we to expect that Jesus Christ shall do? Shall we behold him advancing to meet death with joy? Shall he not say with St. Paul: *My desire is to depart?* Shall he not in rapture exclaim: *This day crowns are to be distributed, and I go to receive my share?* No, Jesus Christ trembles, he turns pale, he fears, he sweats great drops of blood; whereas the martyrs, with inferior illumination, with feebler motives, have braved death, have bidden defiance to the most horrid torments, have filled their tormenters with astonishment? Whence comes this difference? From the very point which we are endeavoring to establish. The death of Jesus Christ is widely different from that of the martyrs. The martyrs found death already disarmed. Jesus Christ died to disarm the king of terrors The martyrs presented themselves before the throne of grace. Jesus Christ presented himself at the tribunal of justice. The martyrs pleaded the merits of Christ's death. Jesus Christ interceded in behalf of the martyrs.

Let the great adversary, then, do his worst to terrify me with the image of the crimes which I have committed; let him trace them before my eyes in the blackest characters which his malignity can employ; let him collect into one dark point, all that is hideous and hateful in my life; let him attempt to overwhelm me with dismay, by rousing the idea of that tremendous tribunal, before which all the actions of men are to be scrutinized, so that like *Joshua the high priest*, I find myself standing in the presence of God, *cloathed with filthy garments*, Zech. iii. 1. &c. and Satan standing at his right hand, to expose my turpitude: I hear at the same time the voice of one pleading in my behalf:

I hear these reviving words: *Is not this a brand pluckt out of the fire? . . . . Take away the filthy garments from him . . . . Let them set a fair mitre upon his head . . . . and I will clothe him with change of raiment.*

SERMON XI.

PART III.

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

HEB. ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.

WE now come in the

III. Third and last place, to consider death rendered formidable, from its being attended with the loss of titles, honors, and every other earthly possession: and, in opposition to this, we are to view the death of Jesus Christ as removing that terror, by giving us complete assurance of a blessed eternity. We are going to contemplate death as a universal shipwreck, swallowing up our worldly fortunes and prospects. We are going to contemplate Jesus Christ as a *conqueror*, and his death as the pledge and security of a boundless and ever-

lasting felicity, which shall amply compensate to us the loss of all those possessions, of which we are about to be stripped by the unsparing hand of death.

When we attempt to stammer out a few words from the pulpit, respecting the felicity which God has laid up for his people in another world, we borrow the images of every thing that is capable of touching the heart, and of communicating delight. We call in to our assistance the soul of man, with all its exalted faculties; the body, with all its beautiful forms and proportions; nature, with her overflowing treasures; society, with its enchanting delights; the church, with its triumphs; eternity, with its unfathomable abysses of joy. Of all these ingredients blended, we compose a faint representation of the celestial blessedness.

The soul of man constitutes one ingredient; and we say: In heaven your soul shall arrive at its highest pitch of attainable perfection: it shall acquire expansive illumination; it shall reach sublime heights of virtue; it shall *behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

The body furnishes a second ingredient; and we say: In heaven your body shall be exempted from all the defects by which it is at present disfigured; from those diseases which now prey upon and waste it; from that death which destroys the fabric.

Nature supplies a third ingredient; and we say: In heaven all the stores of nature shall be displayed in rich profusion: *the foundations of the holy are of jasper, its gates are of pearl, its walls are of pure gold*, Rev. xxi. 21.

Society supplies a fourth ingredient; and we say: In heaven shall be united in tenderest social

bonds, kindred spirits the most exalted; souls the most refined; hearts the most generous and enlarged.

The church supplies a fifth ingredient; and we say: In heaven shall be exhibited the triumph of the faithful over tyrants confounded; the saints shall be enthroned; the martyrs shall appear with palms in their hands, and with crowns upon their heads.

Eternity supplies a sixth ingredient; and we say: In heaven you shall enjoy a felicity infinite in its duration, and immeasurable in its degree; years accumulated upon years, ages upon ages, shall effect no diminution of its length; and so of the rest.

This day, Christians, in which we are representing death to you as an universal wreck, which swallows up all your possessions, your titles, your greatness, your riches, your social connections, all that you were, and all that you hoped to be; this day, while we are attempting to convey to you an idea of the celestial felicity, capable of strengthening you to behold, without dismay, the universal wreck, in which you are going to be involved; this day we could wish you to conceive the heavenly world, and the blessedness which God is there preparing for you under another idea. We mean to trace another view of it, the lustre of which effaces all the rest. We build upon this foundation of St. Paul: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. The heavenly blessedness is the purchase of the death of Jesus Christ. Here collect, my brethren, every thing that is capable of enhancing to your apprehension the unspeakable greatness and importance of that death.

View the death of Christ relatively to the types which prefigured it; relatively to the shadows by which it was adumbrated; relatively to the ceremonies by which it was represented; relatively to the oracles which predicted it.

View the death of Christ relatively to the tempests and thunderbolts which were levelled at the head of the Redeemer. Behold his soul overwhelmed with sorrow; behold that blood falling down to the ground; that cup of bitterness which was given him to drink; hearken to that insulting language, to those calumnies, to those false accusations, to that unjust sentence of condemnation; behold those hands and feet pierced with nails, that sacred body speedily reduced to one ghastly wound; behold that licentious rabble clamorously demanding the punishment of the cross, and increasing the horror of it by every indignity which malice could invent; look up to heaven itself, and behold the eternal Father abandoning the Son of his love to so many woes; behold hell in concert with heaven, and heaven with the earth.

View the death of Christ relatively to the dreadful signs by which it was accompanied; relatively to that earth seized with trembling, to that sun shrouded in darkness, to those rocks rent asunder, to those opening graves, to those departed saints returning to the light of day.

View the death of Christ relatively to the greatness of God, and to the littleness of man, in whose behalf all this bloody scene was transacted.

Collect all these various particulars, and still say to yourself: The death of Jesus Christ is all this. The death of Jesus Christ is the body of the figures, the original of the types, the reality of the shadows, the accomplishment of the prophecies. The death of Jesus Christ is that great event which darkened

the sun, which opened the tombs, which rent asunder the rocks, which made the earth to tremble, which turned nature and the elements upside down. Follow up these reflections, and on these let your imagination settle.

The death of Jesus Christ conceived thus, apply it to the subject which we are treating. The death of Jesus Christ conceived thus, let it serve to assist you in forming an idea of the heavenly blessedness. Still build on this foundation of St. Paul; say with that apostle: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* You regret the world, you who are advancing on your way heavenward. And what is heaven? It is the purchase of Christ's death. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* If the means be thus great, what must the end be? If the preparative be thus magnificent, what must be the issue? If the conflict be thus sharp, what must be the victory? If the price be thus costly, what, O what! shall be the bliss which this price is intended to purchase?

After that, my brethren, return to the world.—What is it you regret? Are you regretting the loss of palaces, of sceptres, of crowns? Is it to regret the humble crook in your hand, the cottage which covers your head? Do you regret the loss of society, a society whose defects and whose delights are frequently an equal source of misery to you? Ah! phantom of vain desire, will you still present illusion to the eye? Will you still maintain your ground against those solid blessings which the death of Jesus Christ has purchased for us? Ah! *broken cisterns*, will you still preserve a preference in our esteem to *the fountain of living waters?* Ah!

great High-priest of the new covenant, shall we still find it painfully difficult to follow thee, whilst thou art conducting us to heavenly places, by the bloody traces of thy cross and martyrdom. Jesus Christ is a *conqueror*, who has acquired for us a kingdom of glory and felicity; his death is an invaluable pledge of a triumphant eternity.

Death, then, has nothing, henceforward, that is formidable to the Christian. In the tomb of Jesus Christ are dissipated all the terrors which the tomb of nature presents. In the tomb of nature I perceive a gloomy night, which the eye is unable to penetrate; in the tomb of Jesus Christ I behold light and life. In the tomb of nature the punishment of sin stares me in the face; in the tomb of Jesus Christ I find the expiation of it. In the tomb of nature I read the fearful doom pronounced upon Adam, and upon all his miserable posterity: *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*, Gen iii. 19. but in the tomb of Jesus Christ my tongue is loosed into this triumphant song of praise: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . . Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 55. 57. *Through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;* that he might *deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.*

The Application.

But if these be our privileges, is it not matter of reproach to us, my brethren, that brought up in the knowledge and profession of a religion which furnishes arms so powerful for combatting the terrors of death, we should still, for the most part, view it only with fear and trembling? The fact is too

evident to be denied. From the slightest study of by far the greatest part of professing Christians, it is clearly apparent that they consider death as the greatest of all calamities. And with a very slender experience of the state of dying persons, it will be found that there are few, very few indeed, who die without regret; few but who have need to exercise all their submission, at a season when it might be expected they should give themselves up to transports of joy. A vapor in the head disconcerts us; we are alarmed if the artery happens to beat a little faster than usual; the least apprehension of death inspires us with an unaccountable melancholy, and oppressive dejection.

But those apprehensions and terrors, my brethren, surprising as they may appear to us, have nothing which ought really to fill us with surprize. If to apply to a man's self the fruits of the death of Jesus Christ, were a simple act of the understanding, a simple movement of the heart, a simple acknowledgment of the tongue: if to apply to a man's self the fruits of the death of Christ, were nothing more than what a hardened sinner is capable of figuring to himself, or than what is prescribed to him by an accommodating casuist, you would not see a single Christian afraid of death. But you know it well, the gospel assures you of it, and the dictates of your own conscience confirm the truth, to make application of the fruit of Christ's death, is a complication of duties, which require attention, time, labor, intenseness of exertion, and must be the business of a whole life. The greatest part of those who bear the Christian name, neglect this work while in health; is it any wonder that they should tremble when overtaken by the hour of death?

Call to remembrance the three ways in which Christ has disarmed death. He has spoiled the king of terrors, by demonstrating to us the immortality of the soul, by making atonement for our transgressions, by acquiring for us an eternal felicity.

But what effect will the death of Christ have upon us, as a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, unless we study those proofs, unless we seriously meditate upon them, unless we endeavor to feel their force, unless we guard against the difficulties which the unhappy age we live in opposes to those great principles?

What effect can the death of Christ have upon us, as a sacrifice offered up to divine justice for our sins, unless we feel the plenitude of that sacrifice, unless we make application of it to the conscience, unless we present it to God in the exercises of a living faith; above all, unless by the constant study of ourselves, unless by unremitting, by persevering exertion, we place ourselves under the terms, and invest ourselves with the characters of those who have a right to apply to themselves the fruits of this sacrifice?

What effect can the death of Christ produce upon us, considered as the pledge of a blessed eternity, unless the soul be powerfully impressed with that eternity, unless the heart be penetrated with a sense of what it is; if we are at pains to efface the impression which those interesting objects may have made upon us; if, hardly moved by those great truths which ought to take entire possession of the mind, we instantly plunge ourselves into the vortex of worldly pursuits, without taking time to avail ourselves of that happy disposition, and, as it were, purposely to withdraw from those gracious emotions which seemed to have laid hold of us?

Ah! my brethren, if such be the conduct of the generality of professing Christians, as we are under the necessity of admitting, when not satisfied with observing their deportment in the house of God, and from a pulpit, we follow them into life, and look through those flimsy veils of piety and devotion which they had assumed for an hour in a worshipping assembly; if such, I say, be the conduct of the generality of professing Christians, their terror at the approach of death exhibits nothing to excite astonishment.

The grand conclusion to be deduced, my brethren, from all these reflections, is not an abstract conclusion, and of difficult comprehension; it is a conclusion easy, natural, and which would spontaneously present itself to the mind, were we not disposed to practise deception upon ourselves; the grand conclusion to be deduced from these reflections, is this: If we wish to die like Christians, we must live like Christians. If we would wish to behold with firmness the dissolution of this body, we must study the proofs which establish the truth of the immortality of the soul, so as to be able to say with St. Paul: *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i. 12. Would we wish to have a security against fear at that tremendous tribunal, before which we must appear to receive judgment, we must enter into the conditions of the covenant of grace, that we may be able to say with the same apostle: *I am the chief of sinners, a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy*, 1 Tim. i. 13. Would we be strengthened to resign, without murmuring, all the objects around us, and to which we are so fondly attached, we must learn to disengage ourselves from them

betimes; to place our *heart* betimes where *our treasure is*, Matt. vi. 21. that we may be able to say with the Psalmist: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, Psa. lxxiii. 25.

If after we have exerted our utmost efforts, we still find our frail flesh and blood complaining at the prospect of approaching dissolution; if the heart still repines at the hard necessity imposed upon us of dying; let us strive to recover confidence, not only against this apprehension, but likewise against the doubts which it might excite respecting our salvation. This fear of death is, in such a case, not a crime, but an infirmity. It is indeed a melancholy proof that we are not yet perfect, but it is not a blot which obliterates our christianity. It is an expression of timidity, not of mistrust. It is a calamity, which prevents our enjoying all the sweets of a triumphant death, but not an obstacle to prevent our dying in safety. Let us be of good courage. What have we to fear? God is an affectionate friend, who will not desert us in the hour of adversity. God is not a cruel being, who takes pleasure in rendering us miserable. He is a God whose leading characters are goodness and mercy. He stands engaged to render us happy. Let us not distrust his promise: it has been ratified by the most august seal which suspicion itself could exact, by the blood of the spotless Lamb, which is sprinkled, not on the threshold of our doors, but on our inmost conscience. The exterminating angel will respect that blood, will presume to aim no stroke at the soul which bears the mark of it.

After all, my dearly beloved brethren, if the most advanced Christians, at the first glimpse of death, and in the first moments of a mortal distemper, are unable to screen themselves from the

fear of death: if the flesh murmurs, if nature complains, if faith itself seems to stagger; reason, religion, but especially the aid of God's spirit, granted to the prayers, to the importunities ascending to heaven from the lips of such a Christian, dissipate all those terrors. The mighty God suffers himself to be overcome, when assailed by supplication and tears. God resists not the sighs of a believer, who from his bed of languishing stretches out his arms toward him, who entreats him to sanctify the sufferings which he endures, who implores his support in the agonies of death, who cries out from the centre of a soul transported with holy confidence: *Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth*, Psa. xxxi. 5. Receive it, O my God. Remove from me those phantoms which disturb my repose. Raise me up, take me to thyself. *Teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. Draw me, I shall run after thee.* Kindle my devotion; and let my enflamed desires serve as a chariot of fire to transport me to heaven. The clouds thickened around me by *him who had the power of death*, are scattering; the veil which covered eternity insensibly withdraws; the understanding is convinced; the heart melts; the flame of love burns bright; the return of holy meditations, which formerly occupied the soul, disclose the grand object of religion, and the bed of death is transformed into a field of victory. Many of your pastors, Christians, have been the joyful spectators of such a triumph.

May all who hear me this day be partakers of these divine consolations! May that invaluable sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered up to his Father in our behalf, by cleansing us from all our guilt, deliver us from all our fears! May this great High-priest of the new covenant bear engraven on

his breast all those mystical Israelites, now that he is entered into the holiest of all! And when these foundations of sand, on which this clay-tabernacle rests, shall crumble away from under our feet, may we all be enabled to raise our departing spirits out of the ruins of the world, that they may repose in the mansions of immortality! Happy, beyond expression, beyond conception happy, to die in such sentiments as these! God of his infinite mercy grant it may be our blessed attainment! To him be honor and glory for ever. Amen.